

Outskirt  
Episodes

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Brown's Hole  
on Green River

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Y-X 11.42  
The Chaffee mine 11.40  
Black Canyon 11.30  
X 11.20



# Outskirt Episodes

*The wild and woolly west of early days  
Was a land of crime in many ways;  
Though old from passing years of time,  
I'm impelled to tell this tale o' mine.*



W. G. TITTSWORTH  
*The Author*

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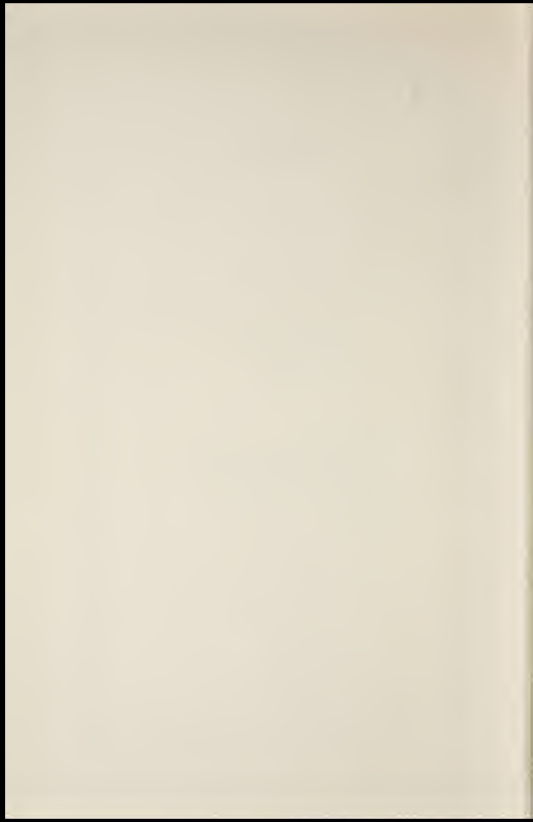
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*cattle*



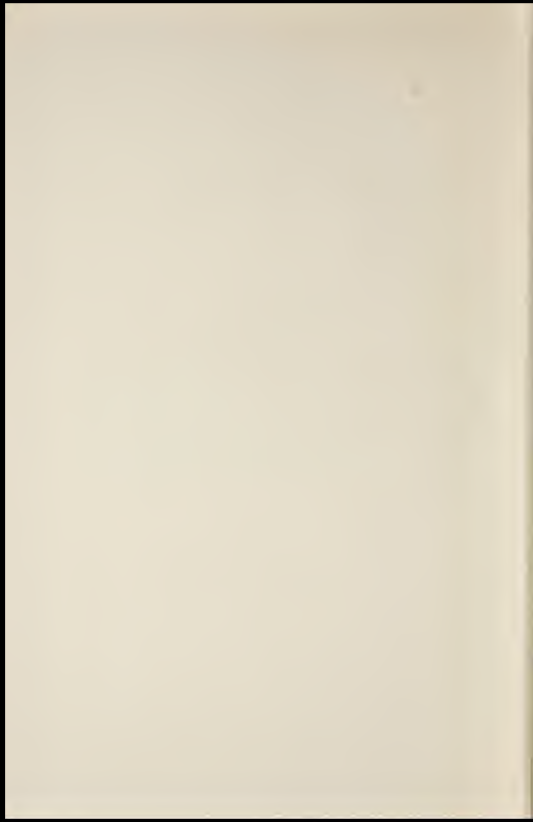


## INTRODUCTORY

### Lives to Tell His Own Story

The author of this story was fitted from childhood for the wild, turbulent life he experienced in the wild and woolly west of early days. While unschooled in books, his skill with horse and gun gave him a wide acquaintance on the outskirts where mounted vagabonds lived a very romantic, exciting life. It is along this line of outdoor life, where every man was a law unto himself, that he speaks between these covers of these unusual incidents.

—W. G. T.



# Outskirt Episodes

## CHAPTER I

### THE TENDERFOOT NIGGER



HE west slope of the great American Rocky mountains hinging around southern Wyoming was a wild, rough, unsettled country. Though teeming with hostile Indians, gold seeking prospectors, trappers, hunters, and reckless adventurers, had arrived. Cut-throats, stage robbers, gunmen, and pony thieves were present. The so-called wild and woolly west was at hand. The world's greatest school of unhampered men and things was wide open. Everybody was as wild as the country itself. This turmoil without law or order had to run its course and change to the christian family man's more modern idea of business and civilization.

Keep your eye on Billy Buck's jaunts; and follow the black criminal's trail from the rule of outlawry to civilization; we will put you on Ned's track right now!

Nigger Ned, apparently a brand new tenderfoot from the east, had just arrived at the big Carmicle railroad cut's cook-shack to wash tin plates and play roustabout for the big camp at the huge fill and cut, between Green River and Rock Springs, Wyoming. *Carmicle*

Ned was often sorry that he had ever allowed himself to be shipped out to that wild country to be scalped by the red devils he was hearing so much talk about. It was no trouble to get transportation out to the front where grading the line was in progress, but it was quite another thing, just then, to get back to God's country.

After many sleepless nights and toilsome days among the

little, brown, deserty-looking, alkali hills, and bad water, the watchful Ned noticed a long string of something he thought might be Indians. The morning sun had just kissed the upper face of the rocky, timberless mountain facing the camp, making the winding, moving string of animals quite visible to Ned's suspicious eye.

"Come out heah quick, Mistah Cook! I'se sho' seed sumthin' dis time, sah, what mought be red debils."

The boss cook came to the door of the big cook-shack and glanced up at the heavy laden pack ponies zigzagging their way down the rugged hill.

"It's King and Billy Buck with a load of fresh meat from Little Mountain. Get in there and help rip the jackets off them murphies; we will have stewed buckribs and murphies for the men's dinner, they're all grouchin' for fresh meat. Move quick! Put on the coffee pot, make it strong; them hunters want it black as tar. They'll be hungry; made a night drive to save their meat, I'll betcha."

Ned's bare feet shuffled him in to one of the big cook tents that feed hundreds of railroad builders.

The commissary boss came out to inspect and receive the meat.

"What have you got this time, boys?" asked the boss.

"Bull elk, black-tailed deer, and the bear hide you have been askin' for."

"Good! Have a snort before you unpack?" asked the boss.

"No, neither of us bother the critter unless it's ter save a killin'," answered Billy.

Ned went almost daffy when he saw the big grizzly bear hide and learned that the hunters had killed, skinned, tanned and made their own fringed buckskin suits, leggins and moccasins.

Ned noticed Billy's mixed southern negro dialect and immediately inquired, "Wha' yo' been larnin' how to make all dis tannin' skin stuff, Mistah Billy?"

"From the squaws," answered the lad.

Ned laughed as only a hot-air nigger can, with the white ivory in full view. He slapped his leg and roared: "What yo'

bin tellin' me, boy? What! You bin mixed wid dem red debils 'thout gittin' killed 'fo' you knowed it?"

King tipped off the monstrous, barefoot tracks of the nigger in the dust and said, "More grizzly tracks, Billy." Then he explained that all the Indians were not on the warpath all the time, and that the bad ones were all north of the railroad.

Ned eyed the hunters' belts, ornamented with Henry cartridges, sheath knives, six-shooter and tomahawk; he learned that their little strange guns would shoot sixteen times without reloading, and reckoned it was no wonder that they could hunt in the Indian country without getting scalped.

The two camp-schooled mixers, King and Billy, usually left a trophy or two with the cook, and they always found a few cans of knicknacks in their pack wallets on reaching camp.

Billy kept trying to think where he had seen the negro, Ned, before, but finally gave it up as just a passing fancy.

Time slipped by, and owing to the long distances to pack, Jim King and Billy Buck quit the hunting business.

Ned became accustomed to the chattering yap and nightly wail of the hungry coyote, that hung around these big camps. His rambling dreams carried him back to the green mountain forests and snow banks. He had heard the hunters talk about where fat meat abounded, free for the killing, where he could slumber in peace, free from the kicks at dawn of the boss cook, and the harsh threats of what would happen if the fire was not built on time. He longed for a fringed buckskin suit of his own making, with belt, ornaments, horse and gun.

The shriek of the mighty Union Pacific engines was now heard on the west slopes of the great mountain divides for the first time. The red man had taken the hint and was moving back with his vast herd of buffaloes, elk, black-tailed deer, and antelope. His paleface oppressors had moved in to stay. Cow-punchers, horse rangers and shepherds demanded the wild game ranges for their lowing herds and neighing bronchoes. The antelope ranges of rolling, timberless hills were wanted by the flock masters from the faraway Pacific coast.

The beginning of the end of the happy days of the red man

in the western wilds was in sight. The great Indian chiefs, who had at first thought to defend their God-given rights by force, were quick to perceive the superiority of the repeating rifles over the bow and spear, which had been demonstrated to them, and were not the daring foe they once were, so they readily moved back to the more inaccessible haunts.

Many of the trappers, traders, hunters, and roving mountaineers had long since taken squaws as wives, and were known as squaw-men; their tepees swarmed with little half-breeds. This situation had much to do with bringing about a better understanding between the white tenderfoot and the red children of the west.

Jim King and Billy Buck, the young hunter, better known in the Ozarks under another name, belonged to the trapping, roving class. They had not seen fit to take a squaw, but had many friends among the squaw-men through the hills. Among them were Jimmy Reed, Fogerty, Ike Frop, and one Duncan Blair, who with his brother, Archy Blair, had a trading post at Rock Springs, Wyoming, which was on the old stage route and emigrant trail, about a mile north of where the city of Rock Springs (made famous by its coal mines) now stands.

The Blair brothers moved over to the grader's camp and opened up their ranch and called the place "Blair Town." Tents sprang up over night like mushrooms after a spring shower. This tent town, like all others of its kind, became a live wire over night, as it were.

Wherever there was a temporary halt made by the graders or track layers these death-trap villages came into full swing almost before any one knew it. When the road builders moved ahead the bedlamites followed them.

The sporting green roll fleecers, of the far-away, big cities of the east, were there with every gambling device known to their profession. It was the toiler's pay-roll, handed out by O. C. Smith from the pay-car, which they were after. Did they get it all? Lord, no! The yellow dust and golden eagle "extractors" from Montana and other northwestern mining camps, were there with the goods also. These western mining camp

sharks were seasoned, tanned, hard-boiled gunmen, acclimated, and fully at home in death holes where the odor of red liquor and black powder smoke polluted every inch of the inclosure. The crimson-stained, dirt floor and the report of the common forty-four six-shooters disturbed them not. They were used to this pace in high life, which Slade and his lawless gang of road agents had set them in the mining camps, before the Vigilance committee hung Slade, their leader, in Montana, and ordered his gang to move on or hang. The new railroad caught the whole push.

It was here that the Atlantic and Pacific blacklegs met on the red man's pasture land in the higher altitude, free from the strong hand of the law or civilization, to compete for the prize that bulged the pocket of the builders. They had shown their true colors, not as they might seem or appear to be, but as they really were. A man's life appeared to be no uncommon toll to demand for his roll, or merely a slight insult.

Poor Ned met the tiger, dropped his roll, and then questioned the honesty of the man who slipped the card out of the little silver box. As a result, he left the town in front of a shower of blind bullets. Ned had given the cook five months' pay to keep for him, but he drew twenty of his savings, hit the business end of a near-by town, and arrived at his own camp a little short of wind and long on fright, for he heard the bullets, and cries of, "hang the nigger."

The frightened Ned wanted the remainder of his roll, which the cook had in safe keeping. Ned had the emigration fever and was going to leave the camp to save his wool. The cook said his cache had been robbed and he refused Ned his money, beat him up, and was firing him out of camp when King and Billy happened by. They investigated the case, and then informed the boss cook that if Ned's money was not immediately forthcoming, he, the cook, would have the honor of being buried on Bitter Creek, where he had attempted his last crime. Ned got his roll under cover of two nasty looking persuaders. The grateful Ned fell all over himself trying to thank Billy for befriending him.

"Listen, Ned, do as I tell yer. Hurry on down ter Green River, wash off the war paint, look up Petrified Johnson or Johnny Pare; they are lookin' fur a camp cook fur a lot o' tenderfeet bugologists from the east. Tell 'em that King and I said that they was ter give yer the job. Understand?"

"Yes, sah, Mistah Billy, I sho' be goin' ter tell all you done tole me ter tell."

A fortnight later, while King and Billy were camped on the east slope of Little Mountain, Jimmy Reed rode in to their camp. He said he was looking for a crazy nigger who had come to the mountain with Johnny Pare for meat for a camp of fossil hunters, and had left his horse tied in the timber, and had gotten lost, or gone crazy. Jimmy said that he, Duncan Blair, Fogerty, Ike Frop, and their squaws, were camped at the head of Current Creek, where game was plentiful, getting jerky meat for the coming winter while the bucks were fat. The squaws had been packing dried meat down to the winter cabin at the mouth of the creek, and had been missing meat from the cabin. This was laid to the lost nigger.

The squaws and a lot of their children were on their way down to the cabin one day with more meat, when they rode right on to the nigger, busily feasting on black currants and sarvis berries, which were plentiful along the brushy creek bottom. One squint at a blanketed redskin was all the hint the nigger wanted; he flew through the brush for the timber.

The squaws hollered and motioned across the creek. Jimmy, who was just coming up behind, was keeping his eyes peeled for a bear, as he had seen many tracks along the trail, when he heard the noise and saw them motioning. He caught a glimpse of a fleeing object through the brush, and took it for a bear, as they often fed on berries along there. He opened fire, getting in several shots before he noticed his mistake. Finding no blood, or a sign of a hit, he gave up the search.

On reaching his cabin, close inspection showed that a bear, and not Ned had been feasting on Jimmy's dried meat. A few fallen rocks from the big, low, rock chimney, which formed a rude fireplace, and tracks in the ashes, told the story. Bruin



was guilty, and not the nigger, as Jimmy had thought from the indistinct tracks he had seen there before, and the door properly latched, which had caused him to blame the nigger at once. He drew his old, heavy Sharps rifle from under the dry skins on a scaffold overhead and lashed it to the jam log, setting it so that when Bruin came out on the hearth he would touch the string that would fire the gun.

King and Billy joined Jimmy in the search at once, telling him all they knew about the nigger, his mortal dread of the Indians and the gunmen in the mushroom towns. These daring mountaineers were not negro lovers, but they were all human, and had been tenderfeet once themselves.

Dark came on, with a cold, drizzly rain, which gradually turned into a mixed snow and rain on the mountain. Being nearer to the cabin than Jimmy's tepees, they decided to go there for shelter as other searchers might also be there. Tracking would be fine after the rain was over, and it was up to them to find poor, frightened Ned.

Billy halted and held up his finger. "Listen, I thought I heard a shot; it sounded like a shotgun over the hill somewhere."

"Some one lost in the dark," said King. "If it is, he will follow up with another shot pretty soon."

"It's gettin' on to mornin', I reckon," remarked Billy, as Jimmy led off down the creek.

The cloud passed over and the moon shone out over the jagged hills, as they galloped down the winding trail.

"Best place to picket, fellers," said Jimmy, as he dismounted.

Pegs were found and ponies staked.

When Jimmy started towards his cabin he told the boys to stay outside, as he had a gun set in the fireplace for a bear that had been coming down the chimney after his dried meat. He was fumbling around, trying to find the latch string, which lifted the bar that held the heavy puncheon door on the inside, when bedlam broke loose in the cabin. He heard a wheezing cough and roaring growls.

"Watch the chimney, boys," shouted Jimmy, "he's in there."

Huge rocks tumbled from the chimney as the monster made desperate efforts to get over the top.

"Look out! I seen his nose!"

"Bang, bang!" went the repeaters.

"Come on, old man, we're here!" exclaimed Billy.

"Bang, bang!" went the rifles again, as the huge paw beat the boulder down. Shots rang out in rapid succession, mingled with hoarse gurgling growls, to prevent strangulation from blood and shattered teeth.

"Good-by bunks," shouted King, as it appeared that he was making kindling wood out of everything inside.

"Here he comes! I can hear him in the fireplace again."

"Bang, bang!" and back went the old dog's nose. He kept retreating back in the cabin, taking his spite out on Jimmy's furniture.

Bruin would quiet down, then about the time he was considered dead he would break out fresh again, with seemingly more frantic effort than ever. Every time his nose and face appeared he met a volley of lead, filling his mouth and throat with teeth and blood. During one of his quiet spells, King and Jimmy got right on top of the cabin, where they could look down the chimney.

"That's the stuff; you've got him dead to right now. Let him come!"

"My pony fur some dry sagebrush!" exclaimed Billy.

"I'm on," answered Jimmy. "I know where the children had a lot of rye grass in a dugout playhouse under the bank."

A wisp was lighted and dropped below; no Bruin showed up.

"He's dead, I betcha," said Billy.

"No, he hain't. I hear him dragging around in there."

"Bang, bang, bang, bang!" went the rifles and the huge beast lay crumpled on the fireplace.

"We've got him this time, Billy; he's deader than two mackerels."

Vigorous prods with an old lodge pole, which lay on the roof, proved the statement to be true.

"How in the dickens did this latch string come on the inside?"

"Maybe the bear did it in some of his war dances afore we come," said Billy, who had entered by way of the chimney, which was no higher than his head. He raised the latch. The old grizzly was rolled out on the dirt floor and a fire started.

The lighted room was a perfect sight; there was blood all over everything, and stools, benches, bunks, tables and whatever had been in reach of old Bruin was a total wreck. The dry sage-brush and cedar wood, which had been left inside so the fire could be started quickly, was scattered all over the room. Dried meat was everywhere, except where the squaws had left it.

The old Sharps rifle had broken the bear down in the hips, which was the reason he couldn't climb out over the rock chimney.

"It was lucky for us fellers that he couldn't use his hind feet, or he might of got some of us," remarked King.

Jimmy replaced his rifle back on the scaffold, under the dry pelts overhead, which was the only bit of undisturbed plunder in the cabin. As he glanced up, he exclaimed, "Hello! Whose boots are these?"

King and Billy sprang up. Lo and behold! There was the long lost Ned wedged in between the roof of the lodge scaffolding. It was with much difficulty that he was extricated from the narrow space above. Poor, weak, and apparently frightened beyond speech, with bulging eyes and hollow cheeks, he was as dumb as Bruin himself. He stared at both King and Billy, and no ivory was in sight.

Jimmy slipped out and got some of his snake-bite medicine out of his saddle pocket. A few gurgles of this now and then, and poor Ned's eyes began to brighten. They shook him and led him around through the wreckage. His wet clothing showed he had entered the cabin after the rain had started. After another drop of Jimmy's corn juice poison Ned's tongue broke the silence.

"Is dat youse, Mistah Billy?"

On being assured that King and Billy, his fighting friends, were present and were going to protect him from all harm, he

the gate through the great Uinta mountain. Major Powell and his little boat loads of explorers were going to enter and explore the great canyon below.

Ned was delivering an outdoor lecture to an unruly descendant of our first son's white saddler. Ned pulled back with all his force, while the mule set back just as hard; Ned was trying to lead the mule up to the pack he was to put on him. To help Ned out, Johnson struck the donkey from behind with a folded saddle blanket, which came back in front of the donkey's heels with such force that it sent Johnson sprawling. The profane threats came back thick and fast in true western fashion. Johnson put a hitch on the mule's lower jaw, and told Ned to set back on the lariat and see him come. Ned obeyed orders and the mule lunged forward. This was the time the hilarious Ned pressed a good thing too far. He kept backing up without noticing where he was going to land. The donkey set back again with great force, and closed his eyes, swaying his head from side to side. Everybody yelled, "Hang to him, Ned." The donkey lunged forward again striking blindly at Ned's face. The rope slacked and Ned fell over the bank into deep water. The mule followed with a loud splash. Ned's yell for help echoed against the cliffs of the canyon, and set everyone in motion.

"Hang on to your rope," shouted Johnson.

"It's gone, sah," was the reply.

"Grab your mule by the tail, splash water in the mule's face with your left hand and guide him to the landing below."

Some of the other horses were rushed down to the watering place below; they neighed for the others left in camp, and the donkey headed for the companions he had left, in the direction of the great gorge, which seemed ready to swallow Ned up at any minute.

Johnson ran along the steep bank and whirled a loop of lariat over the frantic, struggling negro's head, and towed him to safety.

Ned yelled, "Oh Lawd, save me, Mistah Johnson!" every time

he pawed his head above the water, just as though he couldn't swim a stroke.

The bug hunters didn't laugh—oh, no! they just cried from restraint, that's all!

While headed up the river, Johnson was asked about the mountain just across the river, and he said it was the Little Pine mountain, and was the home of big game. The temptation was too great for the bug hunters. The river was crossed and descent began. Camp was made in the edge of the first timber patch in the midst of signs of fresh game. A huge grizzly was sighted for a "stimulator."

Ned immediately prepared lunch and it was gulped without ceremony. Johnny Pare, the stubby Canuck, being only a five-footer, took Ned to help him load his kill, and lit out up the mountain with a pack pony, hunting for fresh meat.

The book-learned bugologists, as the westerners called them, were busy with gun, cartridges and knives, for the plunge into the forest. Trophies were in sight and they were all nervous.

Johnson took a look at the ponies before they were to leave camp and noted that each horse was tensely interested in something not in view from his position. He told the men not to leave until he returned. He skulked off under cover of the young quaking asp, which bordered the pines, and hurriedly returned.

"Keep low, and watch your step; no noise; no shooting, but follow me. Be quick, there's a fight on down there."

They reached the scene and stood among a lot of dead, fallen aspen poles, with just enough young pines poking their tops up through the poles for a screen. The clashing of horns in the opening but a few yards distant put every man's heart in his mouth. Slashing off a bunch of pine tops for each man, he ordered them to hold the brush in front of them and watch the fight. Two monstrous bull elk were contesting for supremacy during the coming mating season.

"No shooting, fellows; they're evenly matched, and may last for hours. As long as I have been in the hills, this is a battle

royal at the closest range I ever witnessed. Keep quiet," cautioned Johnson.

The bulls pushed each other around and around, with apparently no other object than to wear each other out. All of a sudden they cut loose with lightning thrusts and vicious clashes that seemed to smash their antlers in splinters. They pushed with arched backs and strained hams, with lightning shifts for advantage, by first one, then the other; it kept one's eyes busy to discern what was happening. They backed around and around until their breathing was audible. Their bloody noses were forced to the ground when off guard, until it was plain that they were both being badly punished. They would hang on, with but little exertion, for a breathing spell, then like a flash their bowed heads would twitch and jerk, with lightning stabs by first one, then the other, trying to get in a gore while the other bull was off guard.

"Watch, watch!" repeated Johnson. "I believe their horns are locked. Watch that old fellow to the right! See that! He is trying to free his horns. See! He is licked right now but he can't get away.

"Keep yourselves ready, fellows, that chap is licked and if he gets a chance he will lunge for freedom. The victor will stand pat and squeal triumphantly, then will be your time to bore him through the heart. Low down and well forward near the point of his shoulder will get him."

"We want the heads," said one of the men.

"I am not guiding head hunters, unless you save all the meat you kill," retorted Johnson. "We fellows who live off our guns kill no cows or does, unless it is in a pinch, then we eat it fresh, make jerky or dry all meat we kill. One bull's enough, unless they fail to break that lock."

One of the tenderfeet, in raising his gun up over the poles, shook so violently he could hardly hold his gun.

The guide smiled. "Let go of yourself, Mister; shift about or say something; breathe natural; that buck fever will leave you if you shake off that anxiety. Don't be afraid of scaring them bulls; they couldn't hear thunder just now."

The lock proved to be a good one. Despite their frantic efforts the horns held them fast. Johnson seated the men comfortably on the poles, and they enjoyed a scene that few men get to witness at such close range.

"Listen! That is another bull trumpeting, I'll answer." The guide, putting both hands upon his mouth, squealed somewhat like a pig with a dog attached to her ear.

The two combatants paid no attention to the noise. The interested spectators were tensely watching the two bulls jockeying for the advantage of the ground. After a pause for fresh wind, with heavy breathing and arched backs, they stood as if chained to the spot. Then one used his front foot, as a brace, to keep from being thrown over sideways. Presto, change, they break out afresh! Round and round they wheeled and whirled, trying to free their horns with powerful side jerks.

Every man sprang to his feet, with his gun ready. Crash! crash! went the dry poles, just back and to the right of them.

"Don't shoot, men!" shouted Johnson, as he leaped for open ground.

He was too late. The third bull had heard the guide's challenge and now dashed into the opening. He drove his antlers into the rear end of the nearest combatting bull and piled them in a heap.

Johnson waved his hat and arms fiercely. The daring intruder whirled about and stood defiantly. A rush and a shout from the guide and the intruding bull took the hint and trotted off down the slope.

The guide hurried back to cover while the two contestants struggled to right themselves, which they did, and staggered around.

"Might as well kill them, fellows, their horns are locked to stay. Better all shoot at the left-hand bull. Three is the count. Everybody ready, one, two—"

"Bang," went the guns and not a flinch from the bull.

"Shoot the other one," commanded Johnson.

"Bang," went the volley and the results were the same, not a flinch.

The men glanced at each other, exclaiming, "Have we all missed?"

"No," said the guide, "wait."

The first bull shot began to settle back, and over he went, taking the other one with him. They died on their feet.

"How was it they never moved when we shot them?"

"Oh, them fellers take lead at this season of the year like Yankee soldiers," said Johnson.

Forked stakes were set and a scaffold, long as a pool table, was erected out in the sun, three feet from the ground. Each muscle was carefully separated from the other and the bone, without sacrificing the meat, which was then dropped into strong, boiling brine. Twenty or thirty beats was allowed for the pulse for the larger muscles and less for the smaller, hermetically sealing each piece, keeping out the air and the green flies.

"When laid on the scaffolding above a slow fire, smoke and the hot sun above soon gets it dry enough to be lugged around in sacks for weeks," explained the old-timer. "When sliced across the grain you have fresh, tender meat for frying on the bad lands, far from the game haunts."

Johnny Pare came in the following day with the quarter of a fat, black-tailed buck deer, but Ned was not with him. He said he had lost him, and, in his search, he had found his horse tied in the woods and left him, thinking Ned might return later. During his search he ran into Jimmy Reed, who said he would watch and care for the bronco.

His camp fellows turned out to dig up the negro, dead or alive; the outfit started to move down on the river, near the mouth of Current creek. While on the way, Johnny discovered a boot print made by someone who wore boots, as all mountain people wore moccasins. Johnny took up the trail knowing it must be Ned's tracks, as he was sure it was not made by any of the westerners.

The weather looked squally and the clouds were dragging along the higher peaks. The little Frenchman clung to his hopeless task, and was caught miles from the camp, which he was



supposed to make that night. The cold rain turned him homeward.

The sky cleared towards morning, and he was hitting the ridge hard for the designated camp when he heard shots. He rode on and soon more shots could be held. He knew it was no signal for help, as there were too many shots at the same time, and he didn't think that Ned could work his old Henry that fast. The shooting kept up until it seemed like a regular volley practice.

Johnny angled down that way, and on nearing the old cabin he saw a camp fire on the river below. As that was where his party had intended to camp for the night, he galloped down, to find his own camp up in arms getting ready to investigate the shooting, which they had also heard.

Johnson assured the uneasy bug seekers that there were no Sioux Indians south of the new railroad track along there and that the Utes were peaceable. However, they decided to go over to the cabin to investigate, as soon as daylight appeared.

On nearing the cabin, Johnny and Johnson left the tenderfoot easterners well screened. They soon learned to whom the three horses, picketed near the cabin, belonged. They signalled their party, who rode up to the cabin. Johnson slipped off his horse and dropped a loose rock down the low chimney.

"Hey there," shouted Jimmy Reed from within, "we just killed a feller for tearing down our chimney."

Jimmy, Billy, Jim King and the long-lost Ned rushed out and hallooed to everybody.

The astounded Johnson eyed Ned's hollow cheeks in wonderment and asked, "Where in the devil have you been, Ned?"

"Well, I reckon I'se bin most all 'roun' heah, Mistah Johnson."

"Got lost in the timber, I s'pose. How did you find yourself, Ned?"

"Nevah foun' myself 'tall, sah. That old chap what foun' me fust is very much daid in dah on de floah."

"What! Did you kill some one?"

"Nevah fired a shot, sah."

Jimmy invited them in to see what a fine corpse they had left on their hands after the night's battle.

"Our cabin has just been newly painted and the furniture neatly arranged. We wanted to surprise the squaws when they came down to the winter quarters. Come right in, don't be bashful, there's no ladies present," said Jimmy Reed.

The newcomers all bowed to Ned, who blandly showed his front ivory as the crowd entered Jimmy's winter cabin. The easterners stroked the huge grizzly, as he lay on the floor, with his nose all shot to pieces. They looked about the room in amazement. Cedar wood, sagebrush, dried meat, torn bags, tables and skins, bunk wreckage, shelving, in fact, everything in the cabin had been smashed to smithereens. The walls and wreckage, from one end of the room to the other, were covered with gore. One of the elderly strangers walked about the room, examined everything very carefully, and asked if there had been any one killed or injured.

"Nobody killed," answered Billy Buck, and smiled.

The elderly tenderfoot glanced around the room. He took a good look at the scaffolding overhead, then pointing at it, said: "That's the only possible place for a man to have been and lived; that's the only place and no man could have got up in that shallow loft, the opening is too small and too high up for that."

"Wrong again, Mister," said Billy. "Better do some more figurin' afore you make another guess."

Everybody laughed, and Jimmy Reed took his pipe out of his mouth and laughingly said, "Stranger, the Ozark kid has got you going and he's no liar either."

All of the easterners joined in the merriment. They all admitted it was a puzzle to see how any one could have stayed in the room, in the dark, with that monstrous bear, as he must have been very powerful to demolish everything in the room like he had.

Jimmy rose and pointed to the narrow opening above the scaffolding. He explained that there had been double bunks in the cabin before Bruin demolished them. The rain had driven

the lost Ned to the unoccupied cabin for shelter. He had mounted the top bunk for a sleep, not knowing of Bruin's habit of coming down the chimney to feast on Jimmy's dried meat, and he had fallen asleep.

"Bang," went the gun which Jimmy had set for Mr. Bear. It broke him down in the loins and he could not get back up the chimney.

The shot, and Bruin's frantic efforts, woke Ned, whose love-of-life bump was extremely large, even for his six-foot, muscular frame. There was no other means of escape, so he climbed up on the bunk and squeezed into the shallow opening above, before the bear tore his upper bunk down. The cabin was filled with powder smoke, dust and hoarse growls of the infuriated beast below. So Ned kept quiet until they came and killed the old dog. (Male bear.)

Lariats were looped over the monster and fastened to the horns of their saddle. The men mounted the ponies and snaked the bear out in the dooryard.

"How much for the bear skin?" asked the old man from the east.

"Not in the business," answered Jimmy.

"Take it and give Ned what yer think it's worth," said Billy.

"It's a bargain," answered the man. "I only wish I could say I shot him myself."

"Not too late yet," said Billy Buck. "Bank him one through the nose; it is spoiled anyway."

"Shoot! Shoot!" cried everybody.

"Bang," went the gun.

"There, you shot 'im yourself," said Billy.

They shook hands all around, and the campers parted friends.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GOLCONDA DIAMOND FIELDS



ON LEAVING the scene of Ned's introduction to the grizzly bear, the fossil hunters met a posse of men. They were equipped with packs and a regular camping outfit, and claimed to be going on a hunt for big game, though, in reality, they were wildcat stampeders. One of them, Colonel Eels, was an old-time friend of the fossilist. After a short visit and consultation with Ned, they headed east over the roadless hills, with Ned as Eel's right-hand man.

At that stage of inhabitation in those western hills, rumors of rich strikes of hidden wealth was on every man's tongue. Newcomers were scattered through the mountains and expected to run up against sudden wealth at any moment. Colonel Eels had just paid his guide, Mr. Ames, five hundred dollars to show him a salted, wildcat mine of sparklers that the big ones had heard of.

A lanky, green-looking Kentuckian, by the name of Phil Arnold, had become a very much courted man by his noncommunicativeness. He had the habit of leaving the railroad at almost any place between Laramie and Evanston, Wyoming, during his preparation for a stampede for sparklers. Having a pack and saddle horse, he had the appearance of being a prospector. When seen, which he apparently tried to avoid, he never seemed to be coming from any particular place or going anywhere in particular; he was just looking over the hills. His line of travel, on leaving the railroad, indicated a point south of Bitter Creek station.

At this time, pack outfits composed of trappers, hunters and prospectors, with all kinds of equipment, were very common in the Rocky mountains. The men were usually very communica-

tive, unless they had discovered some rich mine which they wished to prospect more thoroughly before staking a legal claim. This being so universally the case, anything to the contrary was noticed at once.

After a couple of seasons of this mysterious work, every fortune seeker in the country was on Arnold's trail. This long-legged tenderfoot gave the big mine swindlers cards and spades, then beat them at their own game. He wrapped his horses' feet in canvas, so they couldn't be tracked, and left them in a secluded spot on Big Pine mountain, going and coming to and from his salted mine after dark. This foxy tenderfoot camped in the timber at the mountain's base, doing his work just below on the bench. By wearing moccasins he made but few signs, thus avoiding detection. He appeared on the railroad at the approach of winter three years in succession, with a poor mouth, a hard luck story, and wanted to borrow money to tide him over the winter.

Arnold always called at the jewelry store of Pleiffer and Miller, of Laramie, and watched his chance to call when no customers were in. The first time he called he said he had failed to raise sufficient means on his two horses and pack outfit, and would like to pawn a valuable stone. The expert asked if he had the stone with him.

Arnold glanced at the door and said, "Yes, I have, and I reckon it's a good one, but I don't want you to say anything about it, or whether you let me have the money on it or not."

"How much do you want on the stone? Let me see it."

The wily tenderfoot drew a buckskin bag from his pocket containing a half-pint, more or less, of stones. He held it below the showcase, fumbled among the rattling stones, as if he was afraid some one might come in. Finally he brought out a large diamond in the rough, and putting the bag back quickly, he handed the stone to the expert, saying:

"I reckon I ought to have about two hundred dollars. That'll do me until I get some place where I can get more, and send for my pocket piece. I wouldn't lose it for anything; it's a present, you know, from my brother in South Africa."

The stone turned out to be a genuine diamond, worth several thousand dollars, after the expert had tested and weighed it; he then made a record of it. He didn't like Arnold's appearance and suspicioned the stone had been stolen.

Arnold paid the exorbitant interest asked for the use of his money without a whimper, and in due time sent the man his two hundred dollars. When he received his stone, by express, at Omaha, a sleuth was there also.

Arnold was shadowed throughout all of his rambles. He spent money freely in all first class hotels, but when approached concerning his business closed up like a clam. This apparently poor prospector thought nothing of crossing the continent to change hotels and made New York and Frisco in his jaunts during the winter.

He returned the third time to Pleiffer and Millers with the same hard luck story, and again wanted to raise money on his pocket piece. He put up a different story each time, stoutly contending that it was the same stone, and declared he didn't have nor never had but the one diamond.

The expert knew better. The record showed three different stones, each one of great value. This news set the wires clicking.

A rich diamond mine had been discovered in America. Fortune awaited the first man on the field. It was a profound secret, except among the capitalists, who intended to hog the whole thing. Capitalistic mining sports were crazed. The idea of becoming a Cecil Rhodes diamond king stimulated them to action.

Frisco and New York were full of sleuths shadowing Phil Arnold night and day. Big money was offered to Arnold to "open up and let just one dear friend in on the deal." All offers were turned down by Arnold, who declared he knew nothing about a diamond mine. At the same time, he showed a different stone every time he let a sleuth look at his "present."

The millionaire clubs hummed with eager voices. The hills were full of excited prospectors trying to beat the capitalist to it. Men were offering any amount of money to any one who

would guide them to the diamond fields. The less Arnold seemed to know, the more others thought they knew. The secret had leaked out, even Billy Buck heard the tip.

Archy Blair was now owner of a coal mine at Blair Town, Wyoming. He had shed his blue flannel shirt for a boiled one, with a sparkler on its front. He came from Laramie city, and meeting Billy asked why he didn't get busy.

"What's up," asked Billy.

Blair told him the rich man's side of the story.

"I don't go very much on lost mine stories," said Billy.

"This is no Captain Kidd's buried treasure," exclaimed Blair, "it's a real diamond field. They say that this mysterious Kentuckian has been lugging bags of high priced diamonds out of this country for three years, and no one has been able to find where he gets them. They seem to lose all tracks of him off south here."

"I wonder if it is worth botherin' 'bout," pondered Billy.

"I believe it is a sure thing," said Blair. "I told them I knew a man that could find Arnold's lair, if he didn't take wing and fly to and from the mine after dark."

"I'll give him five thousand dollars to show me the diggings," spoke up one fellow.

"I'll give seven, and I know men who will give more," said Colonel Downey.

Billy smiled. "I don't believe it is possible fur any man ter go with two horses, even with muffled feet, where I can't trail 'em."

"That is just what I told them. You are the one man who can find this mine and get some of this money," said Blair.

That night Billy pulled out with a light pack and a good saddle horse. Daylight found him many miles from the ranch, at the big spring of Vermillion. Finding that others had camped there a few days before, he circled the grass plot and examined all the tracks of horses and men, both coming and going. One large shod horse left signs that told Billy at least one tenderfoot was in the crowd.

He took up the trail that headed south towards Pine moun-

tain, and hung to it, until he had analyzed the case of the party he was following. It was a group of Frisco capitalists, with Professor King, who had done the geological surveying in that country. A boot and shoe capitalist, by the name of Coulter, seemed to be at the head of the party. They had inspected the mine and were returning to Frisco. They could throw no light on the subject, except to say it was a salted mine.

This report did not satisfy Arnold's pursuers, who had arrived before Billy and were established in Arnold's secluded camp already. They believed this to be a salted mine to keep the common prospectors from finding the real mine, although many diamonds were being riddled out of the sand and gravel, on and near Arnold's discovery stake.

Arnold, himself, had been finding all the best diamonds. Both garnets and rubies were discovered on nearly every ant hill within a mile of the claim.

Seemingly, Arnold, the salter of the mines, used a steel rod. He shoved this down into the ground to bedrock, then dropped his carbon pellets into the hole and covered them up. The miners, therefore, had to riddle the sand and gravel to find the diamonds. None of them were found very far from the ledge near Arnold's discovery stake, and none at a depth greater than three feet. On the face of this, it looked fishy to the excited stampedeers.

In what appeared to be a newly made grave, a cache was found containing a surveyor's instruments and other valuables; also a set of books showing a plot of located claims and a camp site bearing the name "Golconda Diamond Diggings."

This salted diamond mine was once famous among the capitalists, who laid down their tens of thousands trying to get millions. It was rumored that Arnold escaped Uncle Sam's clutches with a couple of hundred thousand.

This mine was located about fifteen miles due east of the northwest corner of Colorado, on the northeast slope of Diamond Peak, which took its name from the salted mine. The location of this mine is now the property of Charley Sparks, one of the big sheep men of Colorado and Rock Springs, Wyoming. We



shall speak of this ranch later on, when civilization appears on the rocky slopes of the great west.

Billy's arrival in this secluded camp was quite a surprise to the men gathered there. His pack of two cartridges to every grain of salt created much comment; they wondered what part of South America he was headed for.

Billy knew many of them, but there were others, from Salt Lake and San Francisco, who were strangers to him. These men had agreed, by voting, that no one would be allowed to leave the camp without the consent of the majority. Billy was informed of this camp ruling and he was "true blue"; he submitted to the camp ruling and lost his chance of catching a string of suckers before Professor King's report reached their ears.

It was believed by some that Professor King would pronounce the whole thing a fraud as soon as he reached the railroad, which he did. This stopped the big offers for guides to the rich diamond field, and all further attempts to get this mining stock on sale.

No one was more gloriously surprised than tenderfoot Ned when his old benefactors, Billy Buck and Jim King, came into camp. Ned was hustling chuck for Colonel Eels' outfit on their wildcat diamond chase. The camp hummed with discussions of salted mines, lost mines and diamond mines. Billy was busy riddling on the claim of Arnold, who was absent.

Jim King, who came in from Henry's Fork, found two diamonds, for which Colonel Eels, a South African diamond expert, paid him two hundred and fifty dollars. These were the best stones found by any one, except those found by Arnold, but he knew where he had put them.

Billy Buck found several small ones, and one black stone, which Colonel Eels said would weigh eight carats. But as it was full of flaws, it was worth only fifty dollars for making diamond dust. Among Billy's find were several small rubies.

Hank Langford, from Park City, Utah, who was in camp, hale and hearty, after being disemboweled on the streets of Salt Lake City by Porter Rockwell, one of Brigham Young's

notorious, destroying angels, also found a few, small, inferior stones.

The sudden disappearance of Arnold, and Professor King's statement that the claim was a salted one, put a damper on all hopes of anything ever coming out of the claim except experience. When they decided to quit the camp, Colonel Eels took his man Ned with him for a hunt. Otherwise, the Colonel would surely get lost.

"Lost," said Billy. "I have known that nigger ter get lost in a one-room cabin. You fellers needn't make fun. It's a fact, and that's not all. He got scared 'cause a grizzly come down the chimney ter lunch with 'im, and crawled in a crack up overhead that was so small that it took three men ter pull 'im out."

"Come off! Don't hit our colored cook so hard while his back is turned," chipped in Ames.

"Hit nothin.' I'm makin' it easy fur poor Ned. He is the biggest and most excitable coward, in a way, that I have ever seen. Jest ask Ned when he comes. He will make yer laugh till the salt water leaks from both eyes. He's as thoughtless when scared as a last year's bird nest."

Dark came on and the two tenderfeet hunters failed to show up. A shot was heard so Billy climbed the hill near camp, answered the shot, built a fire in the open, and then returned to camp.

The crowd was full of devilment and proposed to put Ned's nerve to the test. The men, or nearly all of them, grabbed their guns or six-shooters and got down out of sight in the brush, between the camp and the steep hill.

"Better be careful, fellows, that negro may shoot some of you," cautioned Ames.

"Don't be alarmed, partner. Ned will be half way to the railroad afore the powder smoke clears away."

After a short wait the rocks began to rattle. Both men were afoot coming down the steep bank. They had evidently lost their horses in some way. That made no difference, the plan was carried out. Everything was as still as death around

camp; there was little fire in sight and not a man or beast was to be seen.

A regular Indian "yap, yap, yap," broke loose; then it was drowned by a tremendous crash of rifles and six-shooter shots; then all was still again.

The Colonel stood stark still. He did not move or answer the call of his friends. He was frightened beyond reason. Ames led him to his tent, where he fell on his bed face downward without a word. Ames worked over him but the Colonel fell asleep.

Ames left his patient and went out to the camp fire where the men were and asked, "Where's Ned?"

No one could answer the question, though everybody had seen Ned just behind the Colonel when they started the Indian yell. Eels could give no account of himself, let alone Ned or the horses.

The situation was being discussed more seriously when Jim King lay down on the grass, on his stomach, like he was going to pieces. Ames asked King what was the matter. King struggled with his feelings a moment, then turned over and exploded with laughter.

"What's the matter, man?" asked half a dozen other men at the same time.

King mopped tears from his eyes and stammered mirthfully, "Oh, I was just thinking what Billy Buck had told you about Ned, and how you fellers doubted his statement. You see I knew all about the bear story in the cabin. Jimmy Reed, Billy Buck and I were the three men that pulled Ned out of the crack, after killing the grizzly in Jimmy's cabin."

"But that was when the darky was first in the country," snickered a fellow who had heard about Ned crawling into an auger hole to get away from a grizzly bear. But I supposed that he'd got used to taking chances by this time."

"You see I was trying to save cartridges," said King, "when we went out to scare Ned, and did not fire as soon as the rest did. When Eels and Ned were approaching camp, I was squatted down among the sagebrush that mingled among the young

quaking asps, and just as I went to fire my pistol, Ned ran right square over me, knocking me over and the pistol went off under his feet. I heard a dry pole crash down the creek and the cook was gone."

Colonel Eels rose the following morning in a dazed condition. He told about tying the horses in the timber and wounding a deer. They had followed it some distance from where it was shot and found it dead, he said, but failed to find the horses.

King soon appeared in camp with the two horses.

"How in the world did you find them so quick?" asked the Colonel.

"Tracks, tracks," repeated King. "When you find the last track, you will find your horses, dead or alive."

Billy and Ned were sighted and a regular jollification broke loose as Billy and Ned entered the camp, both on the same horse. They joined the hurrah, previous to abandoning the salted mine field.

"Do all colored people go wild like that when they get frightened? Billy you ought to know, you came from Missouri?" asked Langford.

"Well, I don't reckon they do, kase I knowed a lot of nigger boys down on Bear Creek that uster fight like catamounts (lynx) 'thout gittin' scared. But I seen one o' 'em run one time. He stole a red hot sweet tater from Rachel, what cooked fur the white folks, and slipped it in his little old thin tow britches pocket, and jest stood roun' and let it burn, kase his mammy told him he mustn't go out. He knowed she would whip 'im for stealin' kase sweet taters was skace that year an' nobody eat 'em but white folks. He kept tryin' ter get out o' the house; it kept hurtin' so bad he made a dart fur the old punchin' door, but she had it pegged and cuffed 'im roun' on the floor until he was branded jest like that tater. He run roun' the old smokehouse where I and Wylie was waitin' fur 'im. We had ter hold him and dig that tater out by turnin' his pocket inside out. When we let loose o' 'im he jumped the fence and ran out in Bear Creek. I betcha that brand is on 'im yet."

"What did his folks do about it?" asked Hank Langford.

"Didn't they doctor him up and try to help him in any way?"

"Oh, yes! They put poke root salve on it, but it didn't do no good; he stole moughty near every sweet tater they had, and took 'em down on Bull Creek in the woods, and roasted 'em, and us boys had big times every Sunday 'til all the taters was gone."

Ned sat silent while Billy related this true story, but he apparently never missed a word. Billy had his own private suspicions, as to just who Ned really was and was feeling for facts. Ned never whimpered, though it was plain to Billy that he was deeply interested.

The revived Colonel recognized his negro cook with the twit, "Ned, I know another negro who was badly frightened last night."

"Yes sah, and I knowed a Kunnel what got scart jest as bad last night, sah. And dis heah niggah wasn't so feared his legs couldn't tote 'im out o' danger, either, sah."

After leaving the salted mine, they struck the old Cherokee trail. Ned smilingly accepted the Colonel's yellow coins with many thanks. He pocketed the fat envelope handed him to be delivered to his fossil hunting friends when he reached their camp.

Billy rode with Ned to the head of Sage Creek and gave him full instructions as to his journey. He pointed out the steep hill and rise between Current and Sage Creek, where the old trail of 1855 and 7 would lead him down to the crossing of Green River, to where he was to find his camp or tidings of it.

Ned rode along silently with his eyes on the dim, old wagon trail where the Arkansas travelers had journeyed and suffered, in order that they might live to meet their friends of 1849 in California. Ned was seriously interested in this trail, for his friend, Billy, had told him that his elder brother had ridden, with ready rifle, beside the wagons when this trail was being made. Ned pushed westward without a hitch until he saw the glistening waters of Green River.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NUDE SIWASH AND HIS ANTLERED BULL



**I**T WAS with vanished doubts and pride that Ned Huddleston handed the fossil hunting easterners the fat envelope which their friend, Colonel Eels had given him to deliver. Ned resumed his job of pot rustling right where he had left, just as though he had never been absent.

The eastern fossil hunters continued with their eventless task of fossil hunting between Blacks Fork and Henry's Fork, two tributaries of the Green river. This roaming around over the worn-out, timberless, deserted looking hills did not appeal to their colored, tenderfoot cook. He chafed under the sameness of each day, where the glittering heat waves danced in defiance of his thirst and the longed for snooze in the shade. The water was bad and often there was none at all, except what he called "hot slop," in the kegs. All of these things put a damper on his enthusiasm for fossil hunting. This scarcity of water meant rambling horses, and more work for the wrangler, which often fell to Ned as a side issue.

Johnson's occasional twitting about Ned's previous experience with a grizzly bear, which had happened when he was in a well watered and timbered country, had much to do with Ned's so-far-unannounced intention of quitting his job as camp cook for the outfit. He was pondering over just how he could honorably quit his job without giving his boss a chance to get a man to take his place, when it was announced that the camp was to be moved down on the river for a change from dry camp life.

There were great flocks of young sage chickens on the Green river meadow bottom harvesting grasshoppers for their evening meal. Ned dismounted and began to clip heads off the undis-

turbed young chickens with his six-shooter. Five headless chickens were the result of the six shots fired.

"Where did you learn all that fancy shooting?" asked Johnson.

"Civil wah," answered Ned.

"Pretty good shooting for a tenderfoot, Ned. I wish I could do as well," continued Johnson, "and I'm no tenderfoot either."

"What you all callin' a tenderfoot 'roun' heah, anyway?" asked Ned.

He was informed that newcomers in the wild west who did not know the ropes were called "tenderfeet."

"Tendahfeet!" exclaimed Ned. "I'se bin spilen' a lot o' these greasewood stubs and tho'ns wid dese ole bare mud floppers o' mine ovah at dat Bittah Creek cook-shack what I fust come out heah. Say, Mistah Johnson don't you fool youself 'bout nobody knowin' nuffin 'bout ropes afo' da come out heah. No, sah! Dis ole black boy don't swallow dat tendahfeet and rope stuff, Mistah Johnson."

The guide began to question Ned at that hint of his past life. But Ned, seeing that he had slipped a cog in his maverick-loop expression, shut up like a jack knife and began to talk about fish hooks. Johnson had cast three throw lines and expected to catch enough fish for breakfast.

A shrill blast from Ned's cupped hands meant that the young sage hens had been skinned, drawn, rolled in flour and fried in elk tallow and bacon grease, and were now ready on the green-sward. The eastern professors pronounced them the best they had ever eaten.

Old Sol had scorched the lower land and was slipping behind old Baldy, the snow-crowned king of Uinta mountains to the west. Were there mosquitoes? Lord, yes! Millions of them and they were there to stay and battle with man and beast until the cool of the night drove them to a higher level. They built a "smudge" and their eyes smarted. The eastern professional rock readers squirmed under what they termed "vicious bayonet thrusts."

Ned silently formed a little, soft ball of dough, composed of

black gunpowder and water. Placing the ball on a tin plate he slipped the plate under the easterner's tent, where the men had declared the mosquitoes were worse than outside. Ned informed his employers that if they would get inside of their tent he would banish the mosquitoes in two seconds.

When they laughed at him, Ned said: "De fust laugh hain't allus de best one, you know. If I fail you gen'lmen don't have to pay one cent. And I gives you de best fried fish you evah tasted fo' breakfast; how's dat?"

The bugologists, as Billy Buck called them, laughingly broke for their tent. Ned followed, brandishing a fire brand and commanding every mosquito "ter get out o' de tent afo' he fixed dem like dat hog stealin' niggah tole him da did one time down in de Mississippi swamps." At the touch of Ned's peace fire wand, a luminous fizz gushed from Ned's dough ball, filling the tent from grass roots to ridge pole with a dense cloud of powder smoke. The pests were gone.

Johnson's three throw lines yielded one ten-pound white fish, of fine flavor, free from bones from scales to air-bladder, except the spine and ribs. So the following morning Ned received a vote of thanks from his "brass-collared bosses" for the fish breakfast, and his tip as how to clear the tent of mosquitoes. These nippers had driven all the horses from the river bottom, except the two that Johnny Pare and Ned had on the picket ropes.

Johnny had failed to appear with his horses as soon as expected. The sun was climbing high, and the men were anxious to start on a day's jaunt through the hills in search of some new petrified animal of the ancient world.

Ned was mounting his horse when the crowd exclaimed: "Look, what's that!"

A huge bull elk was plowing up the alkali dust as he came headlong down the slope from the mesa above.

"He is headed for the river. Gray wolves are after him, I'll bet," said Johnson. "He's weary. Gosh.' I wish I had my horse and rope here. They say you can't throw a bull elk by the horns; he holds his head too high."



Ned's horse lunged just as Johnson turned to ask for the use of him. Ned was heading for the bull. He yelled at Ned as he was spurring for the bull, but without effect.

"Now you'll see that fool nigger get a horse killed, and probably himself killed too," said Johnson.

"Don't shoot the cook," cried a voice, as all were ready to fire at the bull as it passed them, in order to avert a tragedy.

But alas! The king of the forest was doomed. Ned's lasso had gone true to his aim. The bull fell helplessly and crumpled up among the greasewood. Like a flash Ned was off his horse, and deftly looping and hitching the bull's great, antlered back to his hind leg. The bull had been thrown and tied down before even Johnson realized what had happened.

"A great feat for a tenderfoot," said one of the professors.

"Tenderfoot, hell's blazes!" exclaimed Johnson. "That nigger is no more of a tenderfoot than I am a professor of psychology, and God knows I have demonstrated my ignorance in that line by believing Ned a tenderfoot. He's a cunning, crazy, deceptive, rattleheaded crank, that's what he is."

A lone Indian, mounted and heretofore unnoticed, riding bare back and stripped to the skin, came rapidly into view. He sprang from the steaming pony, drew a sheath knife from his girdle and, running up to the bull, started to cut the rope.

"Heah!" shouted Ned as he seized his pistol. "Cut dat rope an' I cut youah wind!"

The Indian stopped, flourished his knife, and began uttering words and making frantic signs, which were all Greek to Ned. Johnson understood enough of the Ute Indian's gestures to know there was trouble ahead. He rushed to the scene, making peace signs to the Indian, and telling Ned to cut out the gun play and keep still.

One of the easterners, who was watching the near horizon, pointed to Johnny Pare and an Indian, who had run the horses in on the bottom below camp.

"Yes," said another, pointing to two other horsemen who were galloping through the big cottonwood timber above.

"It doesn't look just right," said another of the men, "but

I guess it is. I saw Johnson shake hands with Ned's antagonist."

A light haired, spare built man, dressed in buckskin with beaded leggins, and holding a repeating rifle across his saddle, dashed up to the scene.

"Hello, Pony. You found your bull all harnessed, didn't you? Hello, Johnson and everybody else.

"Well, well," continued Jimmy Reed, "if here isn't our grizzly eating black man, Ned. How are they using you anyway, old boy? I saw Billy Buck the other day; he was asking about you. He told me if I met up with you to say 'hello' and for you to be a good nigger, and if the sport sharps drew the color line too close to let him know, and that means a standby to the finish, Ned. Billy's all wool and hard twisted. Follow his lead and you may get scared to death, but you'll never get hung.

"Hello! If here isn't the whole family," he said, as the easterners edged up nearer the scene. "You're all looking more like our own people. I suppose Ned is doping you up on hair, sand, ashes and alkali dust. Nothing wrong about this wild, outdoor life only it makes us live beyond our active life.

"What you all got your guns for? Are you going hunting?"

Matters were explained to Jimmy Reed and he looked about. He examined the bull's head, and pointed his fingers at the Indian whom Ned had thought was going to cut his rope.

"This bull belongs to Old Pony Beater to start with, fellows. He has the ear mark and you'll find a bare spot on his rump behind, where a mad squaw dashed boiling water on him for stamping her papoose, while in her lodge when he was a calf."

Jimmy said: "Let's all get in the shade. I think I can clear this thing all up by telling the whole story. Come on, Ned. I haven't had a smoke since I left my lodge."

After speaking to his red neighbors, they all settled under a big cottonwood for council.

"Hold on, Jimmy," said Johnny Pare. "This old, naked devil of a Pony Beater was running our horses way up here on a ridge. I saw the naked devil and took after him. When I

overtook the horses he was gone. You tell him if he ever bothers these horses again, I'll look him up for a target."

"No, no, Johnny, you're wrong. Hold on," said Jimmy.

Old Pony sprang to his feet, spitting fiery Ute like a mad bobcat.

"Sit down, Pony, or I'll knock you down. Ain't you got a d—— lick of sense? You're not on your Ute reservation now. The soldiers will march you back at the muzzle of a gun if these men report you to the fort."

"What was he saying about having them horses, Jimmy?"

"Now you keep still, Johnny. Pony can talk United States as well as I do Ute, but the devil himself can't make him talk when there's strangers around. Now if you will keep still and not get mad I will tell just what he said.

"I'll do it," said Johnny.

Jimmy began to laugh heartily.

"Out with it," cried Johnson.

Turning to Johnny with a splitting chuckle, Jimmy said: "You don't deny being a Frenchman, do you, Johnny?"

"No, and I'm glad of it."

"Well, Old Pony said you was a liar. I signed to him, "no, no," that you were not, but he insisted that he had heard me say that you were nothing by a d—— lying, frog-eating tub of guts."

After the roar had subsided, Jimmy explained that he had not meant Johnny, but old Geboo when he told Ike Frop that he didn't know who the fellow was who shot Hamley Sarell, in Green River city while Geboo was shaving him.

Jimmy started his story about the bull by saying, "You fellows must keep still or we never will get anywhere. It's hard enough for me to talk when smoking, without listening to other gab.

"Johnny Simo, a half-breed Sioux, and Casamero, a Mexican, caught this bull when a calf and gave it to Old Pony Beater's Shoshone squaw. One of the officers up here at Fort Bridger let the squaw have a milch cow to raise the calf on. He was to get the calf, and also the cow back, in return for the extra

milk, sugar and other good things he gave her from time to time. Tickup, Pony's squaw, took the calf in the lodge and raised it up with her little paleface girl, Mincy. The calf was a pet for every papoose that came along; they all stole sugar and salt from their mothers for the little pet bull.

"The growing calf followed a little girl into a lodge, and not getting his expected sugar, stamped the girl and got a dose of hot water on his behind, branding him for life.

"Old Pony Beater grew jealous of his squaw because of her frequent visits to the Post after the knickknacks the officers were to give her. Pony moved his camp, taking the cow and elk calf with him. He traded the cow to Mexican Joe for three ponies. Joe took the cow down to the lower end of Brown's Hole to his Mexican outlaw winter camp. The officer was moved to another post and got nothing but experience for his bargain.

"The bull grew up, going and coming at will. Early this morning he appeared at Old Pony's lodge door and pawed for admission. No one came so he went to the next door. The Indian came and raised the flap door. Not having seen the bull for a long time, the Indian was startled and backed up. The bull started to follow him up and crowded his head in the narrow doorway. The Indian slapped him across the nose; the bull charged, goring the buck in the cheek as he entered the lodge doorway, getting his horns entangled. Becoming infuriated, he trampled the children and tried to follow the yelling buck out under the lodge wall, but his horns caught in the lodge walls; it fell over his head and he took the lodge, poles and all with him. Blinded, with the lodge hanging all over his head and body, the bull wheeled and whirled, this way and that way. He snorted, with furious thrusts forward and back, stepping on the lodge, only to be thrown over backwards. He would rise and try to burst into a run and bang into a tree or another one of the lodges.

"One young buck, a brother of Old Pony, ran up with a pistol and tried to shoot the blinded bull in the head. He tripped

and fell over one of the barking dogs. The lunging bull landed on his chest with both front feet and killed him instantly.

"In his tantrum to get free from that lodge, the bull fell over that big, high bank at the head of Birch Spring. He landed in the tips of them big, black birch, and slipped down through the limbs, leaving the lodge up in the tree tops."

Jimmy pointed his pipe stem at Old Pony Beater and said: "He has a severe case of the seven-year itch, and the Post doctor told him if he washed all over night and morning, and greased himself with that ointment in the mornings, it would kill the itch mites. Pony was down in Spring Branch carrying out the doctor's instructions when the circus opened up in camp. Pony, naked as he was, ran for his horse when he returned and found what had happened and saw his dead brother. He grabbed his gun and girdle, gave a war-whoop saying that the bull must be killed, and flew in the direction they said the bull and dogs had gone.

"I would of killed the bull myself, right in the start, but Old Pony had seen me with my gun as he ran past after his horse, and shouted, "No shoot bull, Jim." So I just watched my own lodge and let them and the bull fight it out. If it had of been any other bull they would of killed him, I reckon, but being a pet, they never set out for blood on the impulse as they usually do."

Jimmy questioned Old Pony Beater, both in his own tongue and in English. He then questioned the buck who came in with Johnny and the horses.

"Now," said Jimmy, "I got ahead of my story, when I heard Pony say the bull must be killed. I told Mountain Sheep there, who came in with Johnny, to cut in below on the river as the bull might turn down river. I and this chap here struck the river above here and followed down river, watching for the bull.

"Now, on questioning Pony Beater as to what he done after leaving camp, he says from a high ridge he crossed he saw a big dust off to his right. The bull ran through, or into, a band of horses, and turned to the left, heading for the river. He says he then cut across to head him off but "I no win," he said.

But he was trying to catch up with the bull, or get close enough to shoot him while he was swimming the river. When he saw you rope and tie the bull, he says he wasn't going to cut the rope, but was going to stick him while he was hot, so he would bleed and make good meat. He says he would have been killed for trying to stick his own bull if it hadn't been for Johnson.

"Now, fellows, you know as much about this mixup as I do so fight it out by having a good smoke and parting friends. What do you all say?"

Each one, with the exception of the Indians, rose and voted. Then Old Pony Beater rose, unconsciously exposing his nakedness.

Pointing at Jimmy Reed, he exclaimed, "Heap good talk. Indian no mad."

Ned had mounted his horse and now faced the crowd. He said Mr. Reed had made a good judge, so now he wanted to ask him a question.

"Spit er out," said Jimmy.

"Now, Mistah Jimmy, my laigs won't stan' roun' and wait ter get meself killed. No! Da won't, Mistah Jimmy. I jest lose me haid when I gits scared an' dem laigs o' mine totes me off to safety. Yes, da do. I can't hep dat, Mistah Jimmy. Now, I seed trouble comin' roun' heah an' I'se goin' ter discha'ge meself, widout pay, dis mornin', and da is no mo' cook roun' heah. Can dese men blame me fo' quittin' 'thout warnin' dem? Do yer s'pose da will blame Mistah Billy Buck fo' sendin' dem a cook what quit de job like I been an' done, Mistah Jimmy? I'se askin' you kase yer bin Billy's kind, and he tole me to be white inside; play fair; and be good an' kind ter the weak, as the strong needed no help. He said fur me ter sleep wid one eye open, fight my own faults, and keep my powder dry. What do you say, Mistah Jimmy, is it rite to quit mah job?"

The veteran squaw-man approached Ned, and, with steady, questioning gaze, he asked, "Are you afraid of these Indians, Ned?"

"No, sah," was the reply.

"What is it then?"

Ned silently touched his head.

"I understand, Ned," said the man of nature. "Billy was right; fight yourself. Billy's heart is in the right place, God bless the little devil! He and I met a tenderfoot boy the other day who lost his mule and was hunting his uncle's lost team on foot. Billy jumped down from his horse, handed the reins to the boy, then jumped up behind me, saying, 'use the outfit as your own and get that team. Don't be afraid of that jerky meat on the saddle, it's good. Good-by, Charley Sparks, say hello to your uncle Sam Spicer for me.' That's the reason Billy carries the keys to every man's past and present life in this country. He's as the dead about other men's affairs, and that fact alone opens every camp and lodge door in this country to him. Follow Billy, Ned, and we will all forget that you are black."

"You don't say nothin' 'bout my quittin'," Mistah Jimmy."

"Now, Ned, you, like myself, are from the place where a nigger is nothing more than a mule or a foxhound. Men grow bigger out here, Ned. We are all creatures of time and circumstances out here in the hills. We know but little, and that none are perfect. We take things as they are and call it good, for we know not what is for the best."

"Say, Mistah Jimmy, you don't know how hard it is ter be a nigger. No, yer don't! You see, I has to deny mah own self protection, and if I differ with a white man I darsent say so. I has to dodge an' run an' be called a coward when I hain't. If I claim mah rights an' stick up fur mahself, den da's anotha' daid niggah, dat's all, Mistah Jimmy."

"If you feel that way, Ned, you have a perfect right to quit your job," said Jimmy.

Every one present heard this open heart-to-heart conversation. All the eastern professors came forward and shook hands with their self-discharged cook. They earnestly requested Ned to stay but his decision was already made. He was given a recommendation as a good camp cook, and an order on S. I. Fields of Green River, Wyoming, for his wages in full.

Ned pointed up the river. Coming down full tilt was Ben

Reed, Jimmy's oldest half-breed boy, and following him were a half dozen other Indian boys and girls. They rode bareback, no bridle, but just leather thongs looped over the ponies' under jaw for guide reins.

"That's right, Mincy," said Jimmy as the girl handed Old Pony his clothes.

"Is Mr. Pony that child's father?" asked one of the easterners.

"Lordy, no!" said Jimmy, "he's her Ute stepfather. Tickup, her mother is a Shoshone squaw, you can guess the rest. Mincy is too white and pretty in the face for a full blooded Indian."

"Let's adjourn, fellows, I've got to go," said Jimmy.

Old Pony Beater rushed down to stick his bull, so he would bleed good. He touched the already stiff bull, threw up his hands and shouted, "Heap too much white man's talk!"

Ned started down after his rope and everybody went along to see Pony stick his bull. Alas! The bull was dead.



## CHAPTER V

### TROUBLE IN THE TIE CAMP



HO in the Sam Hill is that?" asked Billy Buck. "He rides like one of our mountain kind."

The approaching horseman held up his hand, and the pack ponies stopped.

Jim King and his hunting partner has just climbed up the steep face of the bench land, and were looking towards Green River. On the bottom below and up to the river, the lone horseman galloped toward them.

It was old John Bell, a trapper and fossil hunter, well known to King and Billy. He hallooed and asked, "Seen anything of Jessy?"

"No. We just camped below there," pointing to the river.

"Our camp is just above," said Bell. "Jessy left camp yesterday noon. I heard several shots last evening. They sounded down the river. I called often with shots last night but got no answer. He has his Winchester and forty-four and plenty of cartridges. Something is wrong, boys."

"Your brother is not on the river below, John, or he would have seen our outfit. Eight packs, and us two on horseback, would attract his attention a long ways off. There's not a red Sioux on this side of the divide along here."

"I know they quit coming across after Camp Brown and Stambo were established, and held by the soldiers to protect the miners up in the South Pass city, and the miner's delight country," answered Bell.

Billy handed Bell his lead rope. "Take our packs ter your camp, John. Jim and me are fresh mounted and have good glasses. Jim kin foller the rim upriver and skin every nook on the bottom down below from the bench brink with the

glasses, while I search the bench land fer tracks. Now is the time ter rush things. He mought of shot hisself so he can't answer a signal. Stick ter the cottonwoods and willows as yer go up ter yer camp, where Jim can't see with the glasses."

The lead rope from each pack pony's hackamore to the other pony's tail put them all in a string, and John galloped away with the light packs as fast as if he had but the one pony.

Bell reached his camp, searching the willows along the river as he was returning. A signal shot from King called him to the open meadow land, which was bordered by a strip of tall rye grass. King had stationed Billy there, by signals, after he drew near the objects in view on the bottom below. King kept moving his hat to the left as John rode toward the scene. King's hat went up and John halted.

"Now you have the line; keep fifty steps apart and ride straight for me," shouted King. "I see the fourth object. Three of them look like bears laying down, and the fourth object, I fear, is Jessy."

Billy and John rode straight toward King. Two of the objects sat up and they halted. Both rifles cracked. One object fell dead and the other ran. A few jumps of the horses and Billy was near it and he fired again. King had dismounted and now rested his field glasses on the muzzle of his gun. This took up the action of the nerves on his glasses, and he could see plainly what had happened. There were three dead bears, and near the largest bear a man lay prostrate.

The small space of flattened grass showed that a very desperate struggle for life had taken place on the very spot where the bear had lain to nurse her cubs. Gore was everywhere. Jessy was drenched with blood. Her vicious blow had sent the rifle whirling through the tall grass, several steps from the scene.

Two small poles and a blanket were made into a stretcher and Jessy was carried into the camp. Finally Jessy became conscious.

He told the men how he had been crawling through the tall grass to get a shot at an old buck antelope on the brow of the

bench. With head down, pushing his gun ahead of him, he crawled through the tall grass right on to the old she bear and her two cubs. The cubs sprang up from nursing with a growl. The old lady rose fighting, and struck the ready gun out of Jessy's hand before he could fire. She grabbed him around the shoulders. He drew his six-shooter and shot her in the lower throat and through the head. The bullet holes showed good work; two death shots, and one eye shot out, and the other burned out with a glancing shot. This probably saved Jessy from being finished on the spot. As it was, she had scalped him, fractured his arm and crushed his shoulder.

King and Billy stopped over and helped John fix up Jessy, until he was able to get up. From appearances, it seemed that most of his scalp would be saved.

During this time, Ike Frop and Fogerty, with their squaws, came down the river. They laid over and discussed the news, which was discouraging to Billy Buck and King, who were on their way up-river. They hoped to get some hunting to do for the Coe and Carter outfit up at the tie camp that fall and winter.

"It's no use, fellows, that old Coe is an old, thin-lipped skin-flint, that would skin a sandtoad for the hide and taller," declared Fogerty.

He declared he would get back at him yet before he had stolen all of the government's timber up there. Fogerty said that Coe had jewed him down on every load of meat delivered, and with no more conscience than a brass-faced monkey had beat him out of over a hundred dollars in the final settlement.

Fogerty and Billy became fast friends during these days, and visited often together. Billy got a fair history of the upriver tie camps, which were somewhat scattered, according to where the best timber was to be found and where it was handy to the river.

Camps of the tie choppers were camped on every flat, slope or mountain side. Coal mine props were also cut for the Rock Springs mine, which was fast becoming the great coal mine of the far west. These railroad ties and mine props were hauled,

carried, skidded, snaked, or any other way to get them down the mountain to the river bank in the winter time.

When the spring and summer floods came the timbers were floated down to the railroad. This took great numbers of men, and many camps were scattered along the turbulent waters of this mountain stream. When the big drive was on, and the river full of timber, the big jams would occur here and there, forming regular dams. This called for expert dynamiters to blow up the choked streams, and get the ties running before the back waters floated them ashore, where they would be left on dry land when the water receded. These jams would occur, notwithstanding the fact that the main channel had been cleared of leaning trees, logs and overhanging limbs and huge boulders, or other obstructions, which might start a jam. This called for foreman and tie runners, with pikepoles to loosen up clogged timbers, and to direct them to the main current. At their final journey by water, a boom of floating timbers held angling across the river with a strong chain or cable to hold and guide the timbers into dead water for a favorable landing at Green River, Wyoming. When these booms break, which this one did, the loss depends on the amount of timber running and the time it takes to restore the boom.

This tie hacking and running business in this far-away, wild country, at this early day, practically free from law and order, or the restraint of society, filled these camps with every class of men imaginable. Wood choppers, tie hackers, and the hard boiled, lumber camp roughnecks, from both coasts, were there to see that the cheap John Chinaman got his share of high life.

Fogerty said that all it needed was plenty of rotten whiskey to turn every tie camp on the river into a volcano.

Prop said that he heard Van Tassel had said that old Coe had kept him up working over his books in a tent all night, when it was so cold that the green trees were cracking like rifle fire, with frost. And that Coe, the old skinflint, would get up every little while and take a nip and slip the bottle back, never offering him even a sniff.

"Stingy. Say, boys, he thinks more of a dollar than he does of his own mother."

Some one ought to fill that camp full of the fightingest bug juice he could get, and start a wave of high life in every camp at the same time. This would give the old man something to do besides trying to overwork his men on fat sow belly and beans, while the hills are full of fat game," suggested King.

Fogerty winked at Billy, and said, "Don't worry about the old man having something lively on his hands up the river. There is a big trap set up the river, and it ain't no bear trap either. The trapper is a slant-eyed, pig tailed cook, on the side, for a blind. He doesn't use beaver castor scent for bait, either, when he traps for green rolls. He uses a liquid bait of a low grade. The high powered, explosive kind, in bottles, is his favorite scent for a big roll set."

"Some tough cuss from Bitter Creek will get full and fill that slant-eyed Chinese, liquor peddling cook chock-full of lead some day," remarked Billy.

"Don't you think it," answered Frop. "Old Quick Shot, a big, burly, black nigger, his second cook, has the whole camp buffaloed to a finish. He straddles around over the camp kettles with a pair of forty-fours, that never leave his hips. One silent roll of his bad eyes makes them all step sideways. You will hear something drop up there when Chang Lee and Old Quick Shot open up the bug juice.

"Mind what I tell you; that tie camp will be no place for an innocent hunter until it is all over."

King allowed a wink was as good as a nod to an innocent man and that Billy and he would not go up the river for awhile.

Frop allowed that the moon had been full several days, and one might expect something on the river, besides ties, in a few days now. Sure enough one morning old John Bell called to the camp to hurry down and see the rebel fleet passing.

The squaws were out first and lined up on the bank with the men. Shouts and yells brought no answer from the fleet of tie crafts that were gliding past. Chinamen, in pairs of two and

four, with pikes and paddles busy as ants, were pushing and paddling and shoving timbers aside.

Old John reckoned there was a real difference between the habits of Chinamen and niggers, and ducks and geese.

"That's right," said Billy, "the ducks and geese are goin' north on the wing, by the thousands—see them go—while the pigtails, niggers and other undesirables are goin' south on the rafts. Still they come, not a word, just hurry scurry poles and paddles."

A ching-chang-wong jargon broke out; they jabbered like parakeets, and all eyes were turned below. A man was overboard; he was hooked with a pike, and pulled on board without a halt.

"I betcha he hung ter his bottle," snickered Billy.

Fogerty had mounted and galloped across the big bend down the river. Frop talked to his squaw a minute, then lit out down the river after Fogerty. They passed the fleet of rafts and overhauled the lead raft, which carried Chang Lee, the cook, and Old Quick Shot, who were a long way in the lead of the others, as they had pulled out early in the game. The Chang Lee raft landed and a conference was held.

During the division of the rakeoff between Fogerty and Chang Lee, Quick Shot told Frop that he was afraid Chang Lee would push him off the raft, and kill him while he was in the water; then rob him and leave him in the river. Quick Shot wanted to go ashore with Frop. Frop fixed that by winking at Fogerty, who advised Chang Lee to cross the river, take a bottle of water, a bite to eat, and beat it straight south for the railroad. He also told him that it wouldn't do for both of them to enter Green River city together.

"That's the talk," said Fogerty. "It is far safer for you both. Twenty miles straight south hits Granger Station."

The raft was landed on the west side of the river. Chang Lee hit the sagebrush trail with a fat roll.

Quick Shot was now captain of his own flagship. He sailed off down the river, with a far bigger roll of green paper than he had ever hoped to see. He was thinking of the "yaller

gal" he was going to tell about his daring western experiences. On and on he drifted and wondered how much farther it was to Green River city.

It was learned later that this dry land, cook-shack sailor overworked himself trying to keep his flagship in the current, fell asleep, and made an unconscious landing. He snoozed until disturbed by the passing timbers; he had passed the city in the dark a few minutes after the boom had burst.

Just then he was startled by a voice on the bank, wanting to know where he was going.

"Green Ribber city, on de railroad, sah. How fah is it down tha?"

The half-breed lad, Charley Sarell, succeeded in making the darkey understand that the boom had burst and that he had passed the town without knowing it. If he kept on he would be swept down the flaming gorge, through the big canyon, and be lost. The boy cast his lariat at the much excited negro, and swung his raft into the shore. Thus ended a trip that would have meant death in the wilds of an unsettled country.

When Fogerty and Frop returned to Bell's camp, after heading off Chang Lee and Quick Shot, it was dark and they yelled, "Put the coffee pot on!"

They found the river rider foreman from up the river in camp.

"Well, we found the runaway horse way down on Big Sandy. We cornered him in the bend of a dry wash and caught the gentleman. I bet I don't let him loose again," declared Fogerty. He used this misleading ruse to mislead the river rider as to the true situation.

The rider from the tie camp up the river told of the wildest scene he had ever witnessed. Chang Lee, a Chinese poker and three-card monte crook, and his partner, Quick Shot, a Mexican monte crook, had smuggled a lot of rotten whiskey into the camp; they sold it for fifty cents a finger, and unloaded bottles at high tide prices, in every camp up there. The toughs set out to clean up the camps. The rows were going on in the upper camps before those below knew it.

There were two factions of the Chinamen and the trouble

started among themselves. A noted Chinese, Sam Sing, cashed all the Company's pay checks at a discount so heavy that it was common talk he got all of the camp pay.

Sam Sing's quarters had been robbed several times, but all they ever found in his cache was just a few coins. He never had enough to cash but just another check or two, according to the statement he made to each man, as he cashed his check. He cashed all the checks just the same.

It was the general opinion that Chang Lee, one of the cooks had something to do with the smuggling in of the "rot gut," as they called that kind of whiskey; also with the cashing of the checks, for the whiskey always arrived on pay day. This Chang Lee's negro cook was a regular arsenal. It was whispered around that he, Old Quick Shot, as they called him, had gotten his man every time, in nearly every mining town and lumber camp in the northwest.

The negro never did any blowing and seemed perfectly quiet. But Chang Lee told others that he got Old Quick Shot's record over at Boise, Idaho, where he had painted the town red. The night he left he had bagged two bad gunmen, and took a comfortable roll which he had won at Mexican monte. Chang Lee said that he was so afraid of the surly negro that he had a mind to quit the camp.

"On my way down," said the river rider, "I learned that Chang Lee and Quick Shot left on the same raft down the river. This and other little things I had noticed about their shack, made me suspicious that Chang Lee might just have the nigger hypnotized, or under his influence in some way, and had the nigger do and act out the play just as he had told him. He might do this to get by with the bluff for his own protection in his game, for Chang Lee was certainly the brains of the camp. On the other hand, Quick Shot spoke Mexican just as good as a greaser, and Taresa, a Mexican, who knew the nigger down on the Texas and Mexican border, says the high-rolling cow-punchers had nothing on the nigger when the game closed down there."

"Yer can't tell nothin' 'bout a cross-bred nigger, nohow,"



said Billy. "They are all like snap-shot high-rollers, and some of them change names every time they move camp. I'm allus 'fraid of a coward; sometimes they haunt yer."

"The men, generally, had it under their belts, anyway, for the Chinese, nigger, dagoes, and every one that didn't suit their notion," said the foreman. "They set out to drive them out, and I guess, from what I seen and heard, they did it all right. At first we expected it to end as previous brawls, with a little trouble for the timekeepers. But gee whiz! When the men began to pour into the lower camps at the river, with bloody heads, black eyes, slung arms, and begging for protection, it looked different. Belongings had been thrown out, shacks fired, men beaten, clubbed and told to grab their belongings and beat it for the river. Straggling shots hurried them on as they ran scurrying through the timber trails, roads, anyway to get away from the infuriated drunks that followed them shouting, 't'ell with the yellow blacklegs.'

"Blood was everywhere and bandaged heads and slung arms. Limping terrorized men built rafts while the drunken, rough, daring mob stood over them with guns, pistols, knives, rocks and clubs, threatening them with death if ever caught in camp again."

The foreman left camp early, as he wanted Chang Lee for peddling whiskey without a license, and for dealing three-card monte.

"I will have him nabbed when he lands at Green River," said the foreman.

"You will have ter go some if yer git him," answered Billy. "I betcha he's movin' some now. A scart nigger don't stand still, until they get more wind than they can tote. But you know a pigtail is different from a nigger. You know a nigger's legs just takes 'im out o' danger 'thout ever thinkin' anythin' 'bout results. While them slant-eyed Chinese card sharps can outrun two niggers, and open a job ter kill or rob somebody else while he's runnin.' I'll betcha don't git 'im," said Billy.

Billy hunched King. "Say, Jim, if Fogerty's fightin' nigger and our tenderfoot nigger ever gets mixed, ther'll only be one nigger left."

## CHAPTER VI

### FREAKS OF HUMANITY



JIM KING reined his horse sharply to the rear as he reached the crest. "Stop the packs, Billy, something is wrong on the bench ahead."

Billy Buck swept the hills to the rear for Indians, with his glasses, as King ran back to the crest and lay among the short sage brush.

"What is it, Jim?" asked Billy, as he crawled up beside his hunting partner.

"Indians chasing a lone horseman; they're trying to cut him off from the town," answered King.

The little, white puffs of black powder smoke showed the fleeing rider was firing to his left and rear, as he sped swiftly on. He was trying to make the steep face of the bench land which overlooked the mining town of South Pass City, Wyoming.

"See 'im, see 'im!" exclaimed Billy, as a string of warriors dashed from a sag in the land to the left. A Sioux pony went down and a warrior sped past him. The Sioux footman vaulted up behind his rescuer, and they sped away to the right, to get out of range of the rifle that had killed his pony.

Squads, pairs, and single warriors darted from the timber patch above, where they had concealed themselves the night before, awaiting this opportunity. The Indians encircled the grazing ponies and they dashed madly down the flat, stampeding before the waving skins and blankets of the pursuing savages.

By the use of powerful field glasses, through the cloud of dust the intruding ponies could be seen. The sluggard ponies in the rear lunged and leaped, with switching tails, to avoid the cuts under their flanks from the twitching, rawhide lariat that trailed from the warrior's hand.

"We can't head 'em off, can we, Jim?" asked Billy.

"Lord, no! They are too far away, and the lay of the ground is against us."

"If we were in ahead of 'em with our old Henrys, for a good pumpin' spell, there would be more ponies an' less Sioux left on the head of Sweet Water. Good-by, hosses," said Billy, as the cloud of dust disappeared over the ridge.

The mining town was left practically afoot, as the town horses were herded up on the bench land out of sight of the town. Two men had been with the horses, but the wily reds had learned the habits of the herders. They knew they went to the town, one at a time, for their dinner and took advantage of this. They sallied out of the timber above, where they had taken cover under the darkness of the night before. The Indians saw the lone herder and tried to cut him off and sweep him away with the herd.

Soldiers had no chance to cope with such bands of Indians, who knew every inch of the country. This band of horses would, no doubt, be on the Big Horn, far to the north, long before the soldiers could get under way. Such raiders rode their best, long winded horses that had been tried out on buffalo runs. They would keep changing horses and hit the hills night and day until safe, while pursuing soldiers were out of the game, in so far as following a trail was concerned, when night came.

King and Billy Buck jogged on across the bench towards town, as they considered the safest place in the country, just now, was behind the fleeing Sioux.

Old Jessy Ewing was among the rest in the town who were kicking themselves for taking chances of losing their horses, just because no Indian signs had been seen or heard of in the near, surrounding country. Jessy had come up among the miners to try to get some one interested in a copper lode, which he had discovered down in the corner of Utah, about sixty miles south of Rock Springs, Wyoming.

There were no barns, or any kind of stables, in those days. Everybody depended upon the wild grass for their ponies. Jessy

had put both his saddle and pack horse in the herd while he was in the town, and had lost them both. He was trying to get even with the deal by drinking all of old Tim McCarty's rum punch. While tanking up to put action in the game, he told King that he was going "to make them gizzardless herders pay for his two horses or send them to the Happy Hunting Grounds."

King, having rode on the Pony Express on Jessy's route, was well acquainted with him. King, being a non-boozer, and a level headed sort of adviser, put a quietus to Jessy's scheme, and lent him a couple of his pack horses to get down home to his copper claim.

Jim King was a good, smooth mixer with a full grown backbone. He warned Jessy that civil courts were being set in motion, and that the killing of men for pastime was fast going out of fashion, and to cut out the shooting.

King and Billy knew all about Jessy's record. He had killed one of his partners while down on the Green river, in the upper end of Brown's Hole. This was but a few miles from his copper claim, which was located in a short, rugged, little canyon in the northeast corner of Utah.

Jimmy Reed, an old-time squaw-man (still living at this writing), saw old Jessy down on the river ice, in Brown's Hole, and halloed to him.

"Come down here," called old Jessy.

Jimmy dismounted and went down to where Jessy was, and asked, "What is it, Jessy?"

"Come up here a little ways. I want to show you the nicest corpse you ever saw in your life," said Jessy.

Jessy's partner, who had been working with him up in the canyon, and helping him drive a tunnel under the mountain to develop his copper prospect, lay on the fresh snow and ice, with his stomach cut wide open. Gore was everywhere, over the dead man's person, and the snow and ice.

While the particulars were never known, it was supposed that the trouble rose over an old well-known discarded contortionist, Madam Forestell, who was cooking for the pair at that time.

The writer is not right sure of this dead man's name, but believes it was Duncan.

It was the knowledge of things like this that made King want to get old Jessy out of South Pass city before he got in a mix-up with the two herders for letting the Indians get away with his horses, which left him in a horseless town afoot. It was over a hundred miles by the trail to the railroad, and another sixty or more to his cabin in Jessy's canyon.

Old Jessy Ewing was not just a hard boiled early day pioneer in the Rocky mountains. No! He was more. He was a brown-baked, moody, odd freak of humanity, who cared but little for his own life and less for the life of others.

He had spent the last days of the first half of his life as a station keeper on the old Overland Stage and Pony Express route, where Indians were the worst. This includes Pine Grove, Bridger Pass, Tub Springs, Barrel Springs and Laclede, which was a home station on the head waters of Bitter Creek in Wyoming. These stations straddled the continental divide, Bridger's Pass being nearest the crest or heart of the continent, unlike most all other passes, which are usually a lower backbone between two peaks or mountains.

Bridger's Pass is simply a huge crack in the rock, as it were, cutting this great divide in two. It is several miles in length, with either side wall towering hundreds of feet above the road-bed. There are short breaks or outlets here and there, on both sides of the pass.

It was through this pass, south and west from Rawlins, Wyoming, that the old Concord coach carried all passengers, mail and express, long before the Union Pacific railroad was built.

Here, in this wild and picturesque jungle of nature's roughness, teeming with savages and many other dangers of an untimely death, Old Jessy kept stage station. His cares were many and dangerous. Cooking, washing, mending and making, chamber maid, waitress, hostler, wood and water gatherer, manager and station protector, commander and fighting force of the station were all a part of Jessy's duties. As his life was a quiet

one, at intervals he would keep his eye on the road for the incoming coach.

If a cloud of dust was seen just behind the white puffs of black powder smoke which belched from the express messenger's rifles, Jessy would order himself out with a rifle, to teach the red man that his bullets reached out far beyond the arrow's flight. Besides assisting the driver and messenger in making the station in safety, he garrisoned his own station after the coach had gone, through the long, lonesome hours of questioning safety.

This chasing the stage did not happen as often as some would have one think, but it did happen far oftener than the drivers and messengers wanted it to happen, just the same.

While this old recluse took spells, or fits of passion, that bordered upon insanity, he was not totally bad when sober.

While Jim King and Billy Buck were discussing the killing of Duncan on the ice, and other freakishness of old Jessy, Billy remarked, "Jim, that old fool is no different from these old bull buffaloes you see in pairs, or alone, on the outskirts of the main herd. They only run with their own kind and that don't last long. They fight and quit."

"That's so," answered King. "Jessy never had anybody down there at that darned copper hole with him but just such cranks as himself. You see, he had that fightin' nigger we hear so much about selling whiskey, and dealing three-card and Mexican monte up in Coe and Carter's tie camp up on Green River. But that, I suppose, was to get the nigger's money for a grubstake in the mine, for as soon as old Jessy got all the money he could out of old Quick Shot's big roll he fired him.

Old Quick Shot and a smooth Chinaman, Chang Lee, who had gotten mixed up in a free-for-all riot up Green River, in a tie camp, had left between two suns. They left the tie camp together, on a raft, but only old Quick Shot showed up down river, below all settlements. He was all alone; and carried a big roll. But he gave no account of Chang Lee, his partner, who had mysteriously disappeared and was known to have considerable money. This mysterious disappearance of Chang Lee

made it a bit shady along the fighting nigger's trail down river, and finally led to the nigger's arrest for murdering Chang Lee.

The government and territorial officials had been laying for Chang Lee on the charge of peddling whiskey in the up river tie camps without a license; also for inciting a riot and dealing unlawful monte. The landing every one from up river was supposed to make was at Green River city. But both Chang Lee and the negro failed to appear at this landing, though it was known that they had started down the river together on a raft.

The negro was second cook to Chang Lee and knew all about his belongings, and was called the bad gunman of the up river toughs, which made it look all the worse for the nigger.

After Jessy found his colored partner could neither hold nor strike drill in rock work, a thing he couldn't very well do alone, he concluded to dissolve partnership with him. But feeling a trifle leary of the quiet nigger, who kept close company with his nasty looking guns, Jessy decided to settle with him at long range.

Old Quick Shot rode his own horse out to look after the others, and was approaching the cabin, when Jessy stepped out with his rifle and commanded the nigger to halt, saying, "I think you have been trying to kill me with that d—— drill hammer ever since you came here. Now ride!"

The exclamation was unnecessary for the moment Jessy's gun went to his face, the horse wheeled into a run. The little white puffs of dust that were puffing up about his horse, and the clashing echo of Jessy's gun against the canyon walls, meant a quit claim deed to the copper mine for Old Quick Shot. He was gone.

Old Jessy soon found another crank of his own stamp in Old Coulter, who knew all about mining, but got sick about the time another killing was due and couldn't work. Fogerty and Ike Frop, a couple of squaw-men, came up through Jessy's canyon, at this time, and offered to help take Old Coulter out to the railroad, where he could have better care. The offer was accepted and Coulter was landed in Green River city. He was

placed in a small rest room, just back of the bar in Sam Mathuse's hotel, where Sam could attend to Coulter's wants without leaving the bar.

Old Jessy had been the rounds and filled up on bad whiskey. He came into the hotel, where Frop and Fogerty were taking an appetizer at the bar before going in to dinner.

Jessy asked Sam how Coulter was coming.

"All right, so Doc. Gravell says," answered Mathuse. "Want to see 'im?"

"Yes. I'd like to see if the old devil is playing off on me."

Sam turned and opened the door. Jessy stepped in behind the bar and stood in the door, looking at Coulter. Before anyone knew what had happened, Jessy pulled his gun and banged away at Coulter. Sam caught him and closed the door. Jessy turned and walked out without speaking. Coulter lost a lock of hair, and Sam's feather pillow had a couple of bullet holes in it. Otherwise there was no damage done.

Jessy was taken up to South Pass city, the first county seat of Sweet Water county, Wyoming, and jailed for trial.

In the meantime, old Quick Shot had come to town and was cooking in a restaurant that joined Pete Apple's shoe shop. Apple had been missing coal from his bin, which joined the restaurant man's, ever since the new man had moved in. Pete bored holes in a few small pieces of coal and loaded them with giant powder. He laid them handy for the early rising restaurant keeper, whom he suspected of getting coal out of the wrong bin.

A few mornings later the town was aroused by sounds like an earthquake, and cries of fire. The rear end of the restaurant kitchen was gone, and the cook and the stove were absent. Pete kept everything under his hat except the chuckles. The hooked nose restaurant proprietor was rushing about lamenting his loss, and declaring vengeance on the man who blew up his shop.

Some one stuck their head in the damaged coal shed and yelled, "What you doin' back in there?"

"Nothin', sah. Jest came in heah fo' some mo' coal, and sumthin' happened."



This bit of excitement brought out the nigger's identity, and old Quick Shot was arrested for the murder of Chang Lee. He was taken to South Pass city and jailed with old Jessy in the one-room log jail, which had but one door and a small, iron-barred window.

Frop, Fogerty, King and Billy, who knew that the Chinaman, Chang Lee, had left Quick Shot's raft and gone across country to the railroad were all called to South Pass as witnesses. Charley Sarell, who had helped the nigger to land his raft, was not subpoenaed; he had gone west by the bullet route.

Everybody was laughing about Sheriff Pete McPhee catching Old Jessy with the so-called bad gunman, Old Quick Shot, down on his hands and knees in front of Jessy's hammock. He was using the negro's back for a table, from which he was eating the negro's share of the breakfast while comfortably seated in his own hammock. Investigation showed that Jessy had taken off his heavy boots and beat the negro into submission.

After A. B. Conway, the prosecutor, had seen his own reliable friends and learned from them that Chang Lee had been seen and talked with after he had left the negro's raft, and was on his way across country to the railroad, he had Old Quick Shot's murder case thrown out of court to save the county further expense.

Hidden from view, this one-street town of South Pass city, Wyoming, lay along the narrow Placer Gulch, pinched by the steep faces of the bench land on either side. Along the foot of the left bank stood the log courthouse, while the jail, of the same material, stood upon the bank above and back of the row of other buildings. These buildings included a few stores, offices and many saloons and gambling houses, the interior of which were clouded with the fumes of booze and tobacco smoke. Heavily armed men mingled with the crowd in garbs that bespoke their occupation. Trappers, hunters and squaw-men slipped about in their quiet way. They were togged in buckskin, with beaded moccasins and leggins, light-colored hats, and were easily distinguished from the Placer miners, with their gumboots and their bedrabbled pit clothes. The quartz miners from

up about the shafts and stamp mill clattered along the loose board walks with their heavy brogans. Legitimate professional and business men were garbed as most men in any small town farther east. But grafters, tiger keepers, card sharps, and gamblers of all kinds, wore white linen, and sported sparklers, and handed all others a soft, cold, clammy, weak paw, with a bland "Hello, Jack," or "Hello, John," a slap on the shoulder and a confidential smile and "How are you coming, old Boy? I'm glad to see you looking so flush." This was the sop Old Coulter fell for while waiting to appear against Jessy. He dropped his roll and tanked up for business.

While the narrow street was thronged with the mixed classes of the hill people attending the new joukery, called a court, a terrible yelling and shooting broke out up at the jail on the bank just above the street. Everybody either called out, "Sheriff" or "Indians." The crowd poured up the hill like stampeded buffalo.

Old Jessy and the negro were trying to see who could yell the louder. Old Coulter was banging away with his six-shooter through the bars, with the intention of getting even with Old Jessy, who was squeezing himself up in the corner where Coulter couldn't get him.

Pete, the sheriff, nabbed Coulter and was going to throw him in jail. Jessy swore that if he did he would beat him to death, and, knowing Jessy's ways, Pete hesitated.

Some one shouted, "Can't the coon keep them apart?"

"Keep h——," shouted Jessy. "He's the biggest buttermilk calf I ever saw in my life."

Old Jessy pledged his word to the sheriff and the crowd that if he would throw Coulter in and let him out he wouldn't make him a minute's trouble, and would appear against Old Coulter. This was done and Coulter got three years while Jessy went scot-free.

When the door opened that set free the two bad men, Jessy and Old Quick Shot, everybody crowded around to get a close look at the bad gunman, the negro whom Old Jessy had tamed with his heavy boot as a billy.

"I bet ye that nigger kills Old Jessy so dead he'll stink afore he hits the ground, when the proper time comes," said Billy.

"That's jest what he'll do, Billy," answered King. "I wish them fellers would scatter out of the way. I want to get a look at a real old-time fighting nigger. We learned all about cowardly tenderfoot niggers over on the Little Mountain when Nigger Ned Huddleston saw the tame squaws and took them for hostiles, took to the woods; got lost, and camped with a bear that scared him speechless."

"You see, Frop and I never got to see that tenderfoot nigger of yours," said Fogerty. "We didn't get down to the cabin where the bear was keeping house for him, till the fun was all over, and the nigger's outfit had gone. But from what you all say he was just a natural born coward."

The crowd broke away. King and Billy got a good look at the negro.

"By jing!" exclaimed Billy. "It's our own tenderfoot, Nigger Ned Huddleston. Say fellers, that nigger has fooled somebody again as sure as fish swim. I s'pose he's hidin' his toughness from the other fellows by playing chumpy?"

"No," said King, "that Chinese cook has just scrambled Old Quick Shot and Ned, and they're both one now."

## CHAPTER VII

### INDIAN EXPERIENCE FOR NED



**A**FTER leaving South Pass City, where they had been to attend the negro's trial, Ike Frop and Fogerty, two old-time squaw-men, who had taken friendly Shoshones as (picked up) wives, suddenly halted; they peeped over the ridge they were ascending. A group of a half dozen or more columns of smoke were reaching up over the next ridge ahead of them.

"It's Indians, all right, Ike," remarked Fogerty, "there on the grassy spot at Pacific Spring. It can't be soldiers, or any other open fire camp; the smoke don't spread out close to the ground enough for that; it's coming from lodges (tepees). Let's wait for the other boys to catch up before we stir up anything."

The situation was puzzling. Pacific Spring was right in South Pass on top of the continental divide, where the old Oregon trail crosses the great mountain south of South Pass city, which was named after the pass. It was a sagebrush, timberless locality, with a barren looking, gray mountain hovering down from the southeast of the pass. To the northwest the altitude began to climb by steep slopes of patches of timber, with more rugged brakes, as the wee tributaries of the Sweet Water, to the east, heads up there. To the west the Sandies, after their first leap from the great mountain, lazily wind their way southwest to the Green River on the west slope of the great mountain.

The only road between the northern mining camps on the east slope of the big mountain and Green River city to the southwest, strikes this old Oregon trail at Pacific Spring in the pass, making this pass a very much traveled and conspicuous spot. This fact made Frop and Fogerty doubt that hostile Sioux would have the nerve to set up lodges there, unless they

were decoy lodges, placed there for some unknown, cunning ruse by the Sioux tribe.

Jim King and Billy Buck had been riding slowly, and had fallen behind the others while visiting with their old, tender-foot negro friend, Ned Huddleston, who, like most floating westerners, had dubbed himself "Old Quick Shot." He had met up with his old acquaintances at South Pass City, Wyoming, and was returning to the Green River country with Frop and Fogerty.

"I see the fellows coming," said Fogerty, as he turned, putting both hands up to his eyes, with extended elbows, as if using a pair of field glasses.

"They want the glasses, King. Let's hurry up thar. They have seen something suspicious," said Billy.

On reaching Frop and Fogerty, King searched the surrounding country near the smokes, while Billy searched the hills in all directions.

"I saw an Indian chase a pony down toward the smoke from the foot of the big hill. They're not hostile; I'll bet on that," remarked King. He glanced up the slope to the right, and added, "Keep in the gulch, Billy, out of sight; make the ridge and see what's ahead and we will follow. It won't pay to take any chances around here."

Billy came running back down from the crest he had been looking over, and motioned to a clump of brush under the rim of the ridge he had just left. The horses were led into this brush, out of sight, for Billy reported that two Indians were skulking toward them in the dry wash (a dry ditch made by water), beyond the ridge.

"They were crawling along, and peeping over this way, just like they were sneaking on game that might be under the hill somewheres; I couldn't see any, though. Be careful, boys. Keep under cover. Don't kill the wrong Indian."

Fogerty stayed with the horses and guarded the rear while Billy took to the left, King to the right, and Frop and Ned took the center. They spread out and took cover along the crest.

King reached a point where he could see both the skulkers, and part of the family village in the pass. The squaws, papooses and dogs romped as if at home in the little winding, river valley, far to the northeast where their homes lay. King ran down and told Frop what he had seen.

It was as Billy had reported; they were stalking game, perhaps a grizzly. His outfit was in a position to make a sure killing of whatever it was the Indians were stalking. King signalled his hunting partner, who understood the layout.

The two skulkers lay still in the wash, waiting, apparently, for a better chance. (But it was learned later on, that they had been waiting for five bucks, who were to get ponies and gallop around where the whites were now to head off the game they were stalking.)

The logical moment arrived, and the skulkers began firing. Their fire kept reaching higher and higher up the hill until the bullets glanced on the rocks and began to sing over the crest and splatter the rocks about Frop and Ned.

Antelope began to pour up over the crest. King began pumping his old Henry. Billy and Frop followed suit and the hill fairly roared with rifle fire for a few seconds.

King shouted, "Shoshones," to Frop, who announced his presence to the two skulkers, in the Shoshone tongue. The two bucks hurried up the hill towards the whites.

Fogerty ran up from the horses, with ready gun. "Where are they, boys?"

Everybody laughed.

Fogerty glanced around. "What are you giving me, anyway?"

"Nothing but a regular antelope slaughter by a couple of Shoshones and us trouble seekers," said King. "Neither party, whites or Indians, knew anything about the other's plans."

Fogerty looked back down towards the horses.

"Bang, bang, bang," started up a firing to the rear.

The two bucks came up, grinning.

"What's that shooting?" asked Fogerty.

His Shoshone brother-in-law said, "Five Shoshones heap shoot antelope what run up hill."

Fogerty glanced around in a puzzled way, and said, "That fool nigger came runnin' down there with his eyes bunged out like two teacups, and told me you were all gettin' killed up here."

Billy didn't laugh—no! He just rolled on the ground and shed tears. He had had his eye on Ned when the panic struck him. King had seen him break for the rear and had plowed up the sand and gravel just in front of him, with a bullet, trying to check him. Billy had seen Ned leap into the air and run all the faster, but he kept King's prank to himself. This smothered mirth was not checked any when the five Indians from the rear rode up and wanted to know what language the nigger with the horses spoke.

"Black man no talk, big eyes, heap sick in head. Maybe bug-tepee (house). Ponies down bush all right."

Billy and King thought they knew Ned's weakness, and struggled under the thought of Fogerty and Frop's idea of Ned under his alias, Old Quick Shot, being a bad gunman.

Ned's unrestrainable desire to get out of danger was discussed. Ike Frop went down to the horses and praised Ned for his forethought in going back to try and save the horses. He explained the whole affair to Ned. He told him all about the friendly Shoshones, and that one of them was a brother of Fogerty's squaw. He said all of them in the Pass were friends of theirs, who had come over the mountains to hunt antelope, where they were more plentiful, as they needed more lightweight skins for underclothing and children's wear, and such things.

These Indians wanted summer hides as the skins taken when in their red summer coat are lighter, tougher, and more even in thickness than winter skins. In fact, all late winter or early spring pelts at the shedding period are tender and practically worthless. They are too rotten to grain and tan, without great pains being taken to keep from tearing holes in them, when preparing them for use. When made up they are no good to wear. This fact was readily grasped by the early day white

settlers, who learned the trick from their red neighbors. This was all explained to Ned.

All hands came down to where they had left the horses.

Billy slapped Ned on the shoulder. "Stick to it, Ned. You'll be a Jim Bridger, or Kit Carson, yet if you stay with it. You've done well, Ned, but you must learn to roast meat on a dry buffalo chip fire and eat hair, sand and ashes, and call it good, before you are a regular mountaineer like these old-timers that you hear so much about. If you want to be your own boss, and live the happiest, easiest, go-lucky, independent life ever open to man, get you a lodge and a good squaw, and be monarch of everything in gunshot of your family tepee."

The Indians invited the whites down to their camp. Squaws rushed here and there with ropes and things. Pack ponies, squaws and antelope appeared in camp almost before they were missed. Antelope were dumped on the wire grass flat and surrounded by squatting squaws skinning and caring for the meat, taking an occasional hack at the nose of some spike-eared, half-breed, coyote dog. The dog would take the hint and trot around the village, snuffing the air as if to say, "No coyote gets any of this meat."

Billy asked, "How many antelope?"

The squaw took the bloody butcher knife in her teeth, held up two hands, with spread fingers, then closed all but three, meaning thirteen antelope. Most of these were killed by the white men, who were far better shots than the Indians, and used magazine guns.

Smooth aspen poles, six or more feet in length, and three or four inches in width, were stuck in the marshy ground so the thick, smooth end slanted up waist high, and were soon in use. The green skins were thrown over the poles, flesh side down, and the neck end of the skin was tucked over the upper end of the pole, held fast by the squaw's stomach as she pushed against it. Bearing down with her sharp elk or buffalo rib, she raked off the hair and grain from the pelt at the same time.

She saved the brains and a piece of the liver, squeezed and worked them together, rubbed them over the skin to partly dry



it, then folded, or rolled them up for handy packing until time to soak and work dry, to tan them; when they were basted to another skin forming a closed bag, with open mouth at the tail end. She then slipped her skin bag down over the bowed willow, forming a closed, miniature tepee, with a smug hole in the ground in its center and smoked with green willow twigs, or other suitable material, until the smoke came through, giving the skin the desired color. This process also keeps the skin from getting hard after getting wet.

Ned seemed an apt scholar at everything except learning to face danger. He was fast learning to use what Shoshone language he had picked up from Frop and Fogerty and their squaws on another trip up Green River below the tie camp. Ned had the money and the squaws wanted and got it, with Frop's help. With Billy's previous advice about squaws and lodges, the following day found Ned with two ponies and a lodge of his own, a pair of beaded leggins, and several pair of moccasins such as all mountaineers wore.

Between Frop, Fogerty, and the squaws, Ned got packed up in regular Indian fashion. His lodge was folded up on the pack saddle, and two dandy buffalo robes, which he had bought from the squaws for a song if compared to later day prices, were thrown over all, and lashed with a rawhide rope. His fourteen lodge poles, small ends up, were tied to the pack so the lower and larger ends trailed loose on either side at the pony's heels, where they were free to hop up and down over sagebrush, rock and ditches.

As they pulled out from the village, Billy said, "Now all you lack is the squaw, Ned."

"Yes, sah, Mistah Billy an' Mistah Frop, I'se gonna get me one, sah."

A few miles travel down Pacific creek and then came the parting of the ways. Frop, Fogerty and Ned took the road to Green River City, Wyoming, naming Charcoal Bottom, eight miles below the town of Green River as a probable wintering place.

"We may winter up in the New Fork country if the snowfall

isn't too heavy for our horses to get feed," said King. "We have a cache up there with our tent, steel traps, and other truck, that we didn't want to bother with when running around. Be good to Ned; make him eat lots of sand and hair, Ike. So long, fellers."

Billy yelled, "If trappin' hain't any good, we mought see yer afore spring, fellers."

The hunters hit the sagebrush northwest, raised their cache near Fremont Butte the second day, and trapped along up under the west lee of the great mountain, in the high altitude below the snow banks. There they got some fairly dark fur and fresh fish galore, and fat young ducks and wild geese, hardly ready to fly southward. The lakes were full of all kinds of water fowl at first, but the cold blasts and heavy snow finally turned the trapper's paradise into an unknown outcome, especially if he had his ponies with him.

Winter came and the flat bench land below looked like timber patches, as the numerous herds of elk dotted the lower hill and great meadow flats. These immense herds had slipped down from the great mountain grazing land, now covered with deep snow. As the winter closed in, King became uneasy about the ponies, which were pawing in the three-foot snow for feed.

Billy drove the horses in. "Jim, the elk and antelope are movin' down still farther. Don't yer think we orter know enough to go, too?"

"You bet I do. We should have pulled out two or three days ago."

These hardy men, who faltered at nothing, pushed on and on through the falling snow. They passed through antelope and elk so thick and close at hand that one would think they were herded together. Advantage was taken of every game trail broken in the undrifted snow. This favored the ponies. It was the usual three-day blizzard, with high wind to follow, that both men and beasts had long since experienced and learned to dread, which would soon follow and pile every ditch and sagebrush patch full of crusted snow. By these high winds, many hill-

sides and exposed places are bared, leaving visible feed for the beasts.

The immense drifts made direct travel impossible. The ponies knew this, and slowly and steadily they pushed down and away from the great mountain, and crossed Big Sandy, fifty miles south of Fremont Butte. They pushed onward, aiming to cross Table mountain before the high wind set in but failed. They had grazed their horses but once, on some tall grass, and had camped without unsaddling. The wind raised and still no shelter was near. They were miles from timber, rocky bluffs, or any of the camper's ideal places. They drifted on and on with the wind and blinding snow; finally darkness came on. The trusty ponies did the guiding and looked out for ditches. The ponies knew the country they were headed for as well as the men.

"Better stop, hadn't we, Jim?" shouted Billy.

"No, never! This may mean two or three days' wind."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the ponies struck good going. They soon learned that they were on a fresh game trail and the antelope were in the lead and rear. Billy shouted that the antelope were keeping right up to his horses.

They crossed Table mountain (a high, smooth, windswept, timberless ridge), struck Kill Packer creek and went down to Bitter creek, near Rock Springs. Here they found feed and shelter where only a moderate snow had fallen. They hobbled the ponies on good salt feed and grass, crawled under sheltering rocks and were soon sound asleep.

King and Billy were awakened by the report of a gun, and the shouting of coal miners, business men, boys, and the barking of dogs. The whole country seemed alive with antelope. The tired, hungry beasts had halted and spread out for feed. They licked the snow for water. It was a glorious outing, right in town, as it were, for the Rock Springs' people, the likes of which has never been quite equaled to such an extent since.

The long legged, stronger elk worked down from the mountain and stood their ground along the river and sandy flats, and sought the bare, windswept ridges and hillsides for feed

after the storm was over. These antelope never stopped until the higher range, where they usually dwelt the year around, was drained of every animal able to travel. How did they know when, and the best way, to go to escape being snowbound when they had not been in the habit of doing so every winter? The number of these shifting animals was too great to think of estimating. They covered greasewood flats and rolling hills all through the Bitter creek and Red Desert country and south down to Green River, only halting at great mountains and deep canyons near the corners of Utah and Colorado, where they butt against the south line of Wyoming.

Later on, King and Billy had a chance to note the manner of these speediest of all Rocky mountain game. From one or two to half a dozen of the trails, side by side, six inches to a foot in width, treaded smooth and hard, were filled with antelope, one behind the other, walking up the grades and jog trotting (a kind of a half hop) down the slopes.

Coyotes trotted along the same trails, as if they belonged to the flock. When a wash full of snow, or heavy snowdrifts, was struck by the antelope, the leader would lunge and flounder in the deep snow until he was stuck, then the others would crowd up and lunge over and beside him until the path was extended through the drift and packed down. On one such occasion, the hunters saw a couple of coyotes crowd up and kill a floundering antelope, then take the trail without attempting to eat any of the flesh.

When spring came, these animals tracked back, following the disappearing snow, leaving comparatively few behind for the summer season.

Years after this, Billy asked many of the old-timers who stayed in that country what became of these antelope. No plausible answer was ever made. Similar to the going of the wild passenger pigeon, they nearly all disappeared in a few years. The country was too thinly settled to kill them. If snowbound and starved, skeletons would tell the tale. If they were crowded out by the sheep, where did they go? This is an unanswered problem with Billy to this day.

The natural habits of this wild, native game pointed to the winter range for the flock masters. They took the hint, and today the Sweet Water Wool Growers' Association, of Rock Springs, Wyoming, own, in each block, every alternate section. This practically controls the other half of a strip of land twenty miles on each side of the Union Pacific railroad, making a strip of land forty by sixty miles, which these antelope filled to overflowing that hard winter.

King and Billy reached Charcoal Bottom on Green River. Here they found Fogerty and Frop, Johnny Carnes, and the would-be squaw-man of leisure, Ned Huddleston, all with warm lodges and plenty of supplies. They all turned out, and soon had King and Billy's tent up and ditched around and banked, to be used as a storeroom for saddles and traps and such truck. Fogerty let them have a spare lodge for a sleeping and living room, where a fire could be used in the center for working, loafing or cooking. This would be more comfortable for winter than the tent.

Great changes in this territory were expected in the near future. Newspapers reported great clouds of dust on the cattle trails from Texas headed for the new country. Horses and sheep, on their way up the Humbolt and across the promontory west of Salt Lake, were dimming the sun's rays with white, alkaline dust, all headed eastward from the Pacific coast country. Things were to happen in this squaw-man's land at an early date.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LION SPRING TRAGEDY



FROM CROWLEY, a floating freak of doubtful character, floated into the Bitter Creek country in south Wyoming. He disappeared as quietly as he came and was next heard of down in the Little Hole (a rugged depression in the mountains), on Green River, just above the Big Hole, in the northeast corner of Utah, selling whiskey to the Ute Indians. This Little Hole was an out-of-the-way place seldom visited by any one except Indians, trappers and squaw-men on trapping, hunting, and fishing trips. The location is about halfway between the Uinta Ute Indian reservation in Utah and Rock Springs, Wyoming, which is on the new Union Pacific railroad to the north some sixty or seventy miles from the Hole.

Crowley sold no whiskey at his permanent camp in the Hole. No, he understood the wrath and penalty of Uncle Sam if caught selling whiskey to Indians and soldiers. He had a genial partner in his camp, one Madam Forestill, a feminine specie of the human race, that time had cast into the discarded human junk heap.

The Madam looked after the lonely camp while Crowley attended to his trade over on the other side of the Pot Creek mountain, more handy to the red man's appetite for firewater (whiskey). A Mexican, alias Charley Powe, and Crowley had a large gathering of Ute lodges over in little Brush Creek canyon. Here firewater was guzzled by the Indians like soothing syrup by the quack's infant patients, but followed by a much louder yell.

The Mexican would slip out among the rocks and get the cash, which Uncle Sam had paid his red subjects, from a Ute trusty. Powe would do a little finger work and disappear.

The red go-between would look about among the rocks and find the proper number of bottles of fighting corn juice, then return and deliver the goods to those who furnished the coin.

Fired by Crowley's brain poison, the chanting pleas to the Great Spirit for better luck in gambling lodges were heard, where ponies, robes, blankets, buckskins were won and lost at a rapid rate. (In fact, everything an Indian owns is gambling property.) Their exciting songs for good luck would raise to a higher and higher key until exhaustion, or sleep, overcame them. The next day a headache or ill temper called for trouble.

Old Pony Beater drank freely and lost heavily, after which he searched the village for trouble. He went from lodge to lodge with a big six-shooter in his hand threatening what he would do if he didn't get another bottle. His money was gone and credit was lacking. Pony Beater kept up his threatening attitude until Old Nick, an under war chief, came in the lodge where Pony Beater was trying to pick a quarrel with Crowley.

Old Nick pleaded with Pony Beater to go to his lodge and sleep off his sickness. Old Pony Beater blew spittle in Nick's face. Nick whipped out from under his blanket the shank bone and foot of a fresh killed elk and caught the old trouble-seeker under the ear and knocked him down. He then took the pistol from him and walked out toward his own lodge.

The old tyrant revived. He then went to his own lodge and beat his squaw and threw her little daughter Mincy out of the lodge. His squaw was a Shoshone, who had lost her first buck in a battle with the Sioux, while fighting under old Washakie, his chief up on the Sweet Water river to the north. This girl was supposed to be the child of her first buck, though the girl was rather fair for a full-blooded Indian. Old Pony Beater had taken a dislike to the child because she praised the Shoshones and wanted to fight for her mother when Pony Beater abused her.

Many of the Utes disapproved of Old Pony Beater's cruelty and were pleased that Old Nick beat him up.

The following morning, when more clear heads were in the village, a council was called. Pony Beater asked for damage

of four ponies from Nick for his bleeding head and swollen jaw. Nick said but little, though he stoutly refused to pay any ponies. Mountain Sheep made the plea before the council that it was the custom to pay damage in such cases and that Nick should give Pony Beater something.

Nick sprang to his feet excitedly, and determinedly answered Sheep's plea. "I did, I did give him something. I gave him more than ponies," continued Nick.

"What did you give him?" demanded Mountain Sheep.

"I gave him brains, I gave him sense," declared the firm old warrior, "if I hadn't he would of killed a white man and made trouble for us Utes. I give no more," said Nick, and that settled it.

The old peacemaker allowed he was entitled to four buckskins himself for keeping Old Pony out of trouble, but as Tickup, Old Pony's squaw, would have to furnish the tanned skins, he would let that go. No damage was allowed.

Crowley closed out his firewater and hit the trail to the Little Hole and the Madam's presence.

The Indians sobered up and left for their home village soon after this.

A light skift of snow had fallen. Crowley was out for black-tailed buck deer to freeze for spring use, as the deer would be poor and unfit for use then. The rutting season usually comes the first week or two in November, when the bucks quit feeding and become strong and musty and poor in flesh until about the following May or June. This makes it necessary to kill and store the meat while it is prime, in order to have fat buck meat in the spring without killing does, which would be depleting the herd.

During Crowley's absence Old Pony Beater's squaw, Tickup, with her little girl on her back, appeared at the Madam's door. She spoke in English good enough to make herself understood and told how she and the little girl had been abused by her Ute buck until she could stand it no longer. She wanted to get across Green River without her buck, or any one else, knowing



about it. She was trying to get back to her own people, the Shoshones, and was afraid her buck would follow her.

All the pleadings of the Madam and Crowley not to undertake such a trip during the cold weather through the wild, unsettled mountainous country had no effect. She said that death in peace on the trail was better than misery among the drunken Utes.

Tickup refused a pony, except to cross Green River, for ponies could be tracked while the chances were that she could not be. The Madam gave her some warmer clothes for herself and child; also matches and grub. Tickup hoofed it up through the huge rocks and scrubby cedars, and headed for Dutch John's Spring over one of the ruggedest, wildest, little trails in the country. She built her fires of dry cedars in deep pits and under shelving rock to heat the dry gray sand to sleep on. She reached Green River at the mouth of Henry's Fork, where Ned and the mule had gone in bathing together many sleeps before. This was just above the Flaming Gorge, near where Linwood, Utah, now stands, almost on the state line, between Utah and Wyoming.

While she was watching for some of the Lige Driskel outfit to come, so she could cross over with them, or for the river to freeze over, Jim King and Ike Frop, a squaw-man, from up Green River rode up on the bench, from Driskel's camp. They saw the waving Navajo blanket across the river and rode across. She told them that she was headed for Fort Bridger. On learning that Frop could speak Shoshone, and had a Shoshone squaw, and a camp fifty miles up the river, she told Frop her story, and accepted his help to give Old Pony Beater the slip.

Frop put the squaw and her girl on their light pack and lit out up the river. King galloped back to Lige's lodge and put Lige and his squaw next to the fact that a Shoshone squaw and little girl had crossed over and were headed up Ham's Fork for Fort Bridger. This ruse was expected to throw Old Pony Beater off of Tickup's trail.

Tickup had been caught in another snowstorm, on her trip,

and got her toes nipped by the frost. She was glad to get on a pony once more. Frop was overhauled by King, and Frop's camp reached the following day.

Billy Buck, Fogerty, and Nigger Ned Huddleston, the tender-foot and would-be mountaineer, had made a log corral out of big cottonwood logs.

Ned was learning to rope and bust (break) wild bronchos. He picked up this thrilling, dangerous work just like it was fun.

Tickup and little Mincy were taken care of in a whole-hearted way by the Shoshone squaws. Ned never came from Green River City without stockings, big white Chinese silk handkerchiefs, nuts and fruit, or other knickknacks. Little Mincy went over soul and body to Ned's kindness. Tickup stuck to her needle and sinew.

Sinew thread is made from the sinew covering the lean strip of meat along each side of the backbone of large animals, buffalo and the like. It starts in a roundish shape from the top of the hip or loin bone, flattening and thinning to an invisible feather edge under the shoulder blade. It is dried, beaten and thrashed around trees, rocks or poles, until it separates like a wisp of tow. It is used by the squaws for all kinds of sewing, but especially for fine bead work, and is many times stronger than silk, when used while damp or wet.

This all had to be explained to Ned, in detail, by the squaws.

Tickup and Ned were constantly being twitted about taking up so much room when one lodge would do for them both. It began to look as though Tickup didn't want any higher coloring in little Mincy's playmates. But Ned was a good provider, and not like Old Pony Beater. Mincy liked him and spent hours teaching him more of the Shoshone tongue, while she, herself, was adding more to her broken English.

Ned had bought a bunch of wild horses. He was breaking and selling them and making barrels of money. This was all put up to Tickup without effect. After every one had about given up the match between Ned and Tickup, she deserted her bed in Frop's lodge. The next morning she was rustling pots in front of Ned's lodge, while Ned was running in a bunch of

bronchos to work on that day. Before smoke appeared in either of the other lodges, the bride and groom were busy at work.

"Hello, Ned!" said Frop, as he approached the corral. "I see you have a cook."

"Yes, sah, and no hoss in my band is too good fo' Mistah Frop; jest pick 'im out, sah, an' I'll break 'im fo' you right now, sah."

Things went swimmingly in the camp and another squawman was added to their tepee village. Ned kept the camp alive with pitching bronchos and the melodies of "Way Down in Old Tennessee." Tickup and little Mincy had never known before what peace and plenty meant. Ned carried wood and water, grained and tanned the skins, which was a thing never heard of in an Indian village, where the buck hunted, killed and delivered the meat in camp and his work was done, except to bring in the ponies occasionally.

A black cloud arose in Ned's mind when he heard Shade Large, from Henry's Fork, who had just come down from Green River City, telling Frop that Old Pony Beater had come up the Fork hunting a runaway squaw and a little girl. Shade said that Old Pony Beater was wrathful at him, Fillmass, and everybody up on the Fork, for helping his squaw to get away, though no one admitted that they had seen her.

"Old Pony said Lige Driskel had set her over the river, and she and the girl had gone up the Fork to Bridger and that he had gone up the creek but didn't see or hear anything of them," reported Shade.

Shade said that he had talked with Old Pony Beater the day before, and had learned that he had come over from Fort Bridger and was nosing around Green River trying to get track of his squaw. Johnson had suggested that Shade come by Fogerty's camp and tell him that Old Pony would be sure to visit his camp before he left the country, as everybody around town knew that Ned had been selling horses and lugging squaw and kid's clothes down to Charcoal Bottom all winter.

After Shade Large pulled out down the river a council of war was held in Ned's lodge to decide what should be done.

Tickup and little Mincy were hiked out across the river, and comfortably located up near Lion Spring, in a little rocky, cedar basin, on the hill. This was a place seldom seen or entered by anybody. It was a small, secluded place, but there was good feed and water. A regular lion jungle of huge, tumbled down, sand rocks, scrub cedars, and other brush, with overhanging rock shelves, surrounded the place. This spring was a watering place for deer, mountain sheep, lions, wildcats, and varmints. Ned succeeded in lugging all of his trappings not necessary in handling his horses up to his new home, where he only kept three ponies.

The change was no more than complete, when along came Old Pony Beater, claiming to be hunting two ponies that he had lost over on Black's Fork. The ruse didn't work, for the camp was on to the sly old liar. He hung around the camp for several days. Everybody in camp knew by his actions that he had heard something definite about his squaw.

The foxy old Ute started out across the ice one day, where he had seen too many moccasin tracks going up the hill. Fogerty went out, hollered, and asked him where he was going.

"Hunt meat," was the reply.

Fogerty informed him that the government didn't allow the whites to hunt on the Indian reservation and that no Indian could hunt around his camp. The old boy took the hint and pulled out down the river.

Billy mounted his horse and told Fogerty he was going on the ridge and use the glasses on that old chap, for he could see that the Indian had smelled rats. Billy returned late in the night.

"That you, Billy? See anything?" asked King.

"Yes. That old cuss turned up this side of that barrel rock above the mouth of Sage creek, and headed back up this way on the mountain to the other side of the river. He's seen Ned slippin' out nights and crossing on the ice. That's why he wanted to go hunting up that way, I betcha."

Ned stopped in camp the next morning and reported everything all O. K. on his side of the river. King, Billy, Frop and

Fogerty talked the situation over among themselves. They had tried to coach the nigger to run a whizzer on the Indian and run him out of the country, but failed. Ned showed sand among his broncos, but show him a gun, or a scalping knife, and he turned white inside. Plans were agreed upon for another move for Ned. He was to come back down to camp and if Old Pony Beater came fooling around again, they would make Ned take care of him.

Ned failed to come down the following morning.

"He's movin' that squaw," said Billy.

"Yes, the squaw knows enough for that, but there is the snow, and tracks don't lie," answered Frop.

Noon came and no Ned. The shadows of the big cottonwood were reaching out across the grassy bottom. Everybody was getting uneasy.

"Maybe that squaw will put some fight into that nigger," queried Frop. "You see, there is a squaw in the case this time, and Ned may come to life when the showdown comes."

"No!" answered Billy. "I've kept my eye on that poor nigger ever since I met him at the cook shack on Bitter creek. He was born with every bone full of love of life, and every nerve charged with panic stuff; he can't stand the test, boys, it jest hain't in 'im."

"Say, Billy, you can't tell. He told me he would never give up his squaw and little Mincy while he was alive, and I believe he means it."

"So do I, Fogerty, but his heart will fail him at the test."

Billy offered to bet his blue filly against Fogerty's old bob horse that if the Indian ever found the squaw and no one interfered that the Indian would take the squaw and girl. Fogerty took the bet. Everybody had a good laugh.

Billy stepped out of the lodge and announced that it was getting dark.

Billy returned. "Say Frop, how far is it up to that thar spring, where Ned goes?"

"Oh, it's only a little way; just up over the hill. You've bin up there, haint you?"

"Yes, but not from here. I'm goin' up thar as I don't feel right about it. Ned orto of been down. I'm goin' up thar right now, fellers," was Billy's reply.

"I'll go with you," said Frop. "Come on, let's all go."

As the four men were reaching the scene, they pulled their guns.

"Somethin' doin'," said Billy, pointing to an apparently dead form laying on the bare ground, where the lodge had stood.

It was poor Ned, lashed to a cedar log, shivering with cold and fright. He was untied and the gag taken from his mouth.

"Get up here, Ned, and tell us all about it. Speak up, you big, black calf, or I'll kill you myself for not takin' your own part."

Ned told how he went to go out for wood before daylight and was met by Old Pony, with a big gun. He said he stepped back, pulling his gun, but caught his heel in the dog's rope, fell over backward, and dropped his pistol, and just had to lay there while Old Pony tied him. Then Old Pony made his squaw pack up his three horses and took everything he had and rode off with poor Tickup and little Mincy, leaving him to freeze to death.

Fogerty dragged up a big mountain lion, with one eye shot out, and the dog lay dead upon the rock where Fogerty had shot the lion.

"The old bob horse is yours, Billy."

"I won't take 'im, Fogerty. I knowed this poor calf afore I bet," said Billy.

"My squaw thought Ned was a tough old fox, playing fool," said Fogerty.

When Billy was lecturing Ned about his cowardice, Ned said, "Mistah Billy, you all know yo'self it hain't best to allus be jest what you is. I'se got no mo' to say."

Ned took his chiding manfully and hit the trail for the west a few days later.

Ten days after Ned's departure, Tickup and Mincy rode into camp, with Ned's horses and all his belongings.

When told of Ned's departure, Tickup pointed to the river,

and said, "Old Pony Beater no more come back, heap sleep, big water canyon."

Just how much Tickup's hatred of Old Pony had to do with his getting under the ice down in Flaming Gorge will ever remain secret; even little Mincy was as silent on that subject as Old Pony himself.

Tickup crossed the mountain, over to her own people at Fort Washakee.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STAMPEDE



HE withdrawal of the Concord coach from the old Overland route on the approach of the Union and Central Pacific railroads on the western slopes of the continental divide did not mean that the old trails were to pass out of use at once. No!

The clouds of dust from the overstocked cattle ranges of Texas, and the approaching horse herds from California, marked the coming of countless hoofs to occupy the open range.

It was hardly realized at the time that these welcome herds were to crowd the red man's vast herds of buffalo, elk, deer, antelope, and mountain sheep to the point of extinction.

From western Nebraska to Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, they were offering tens of thousands of square miles of grazing lands free for the taking as the surveyor had not yet arrived. The steel rails from coast to coast were a hint to an outlet for all surplus stock from these heretofore isolated grazing lands.

Captain Harding, of California, had heard of a shortage of horses on the eastern plains of western Nebraska. As the Indians had gone back from the line of railroad he started a herd of horses overland to reach a market for his horses.

When he reached Green River, in southwestern Wyoming, he heard of short feed, bad water, and long stretches of deserty country, not entirely safe from Indian raids. This and the heretofore reports of the Blue Box express hold-ups from the north, and of Bitter Creek horse thieves, set the Captain looking for a guide. Jim King, an old pony express rider, and Billy Buck, an old-time hunter, along the line of railroad during its construction, were recommended to him.

The Captain jumped a freight train and dropped off at Rock



Springs, fourteen miles to the east, and inquired for his men. Billy was in town, and was described to him as a sawed-off, smooth faced bundle of buckskin fringes, with beaded leggins, and a white, broad-rimmed hat.

The Captain spied his man crossing the track and halted the rider.

Billy wheeled his horse and rode up. "Was it me you hol-lered to, Mr.?"

"Yes. I am looking for Jim King or Billy Buck."

"Well, you found half of 'em right now. I'm the Billy part. What do yer want?"

"I want a reliable guide, that knows this Bitter Creek coun-try, to help me handle a herd of horses through this alkali country, east of here."

"Well, I reckon I or Jim, either one, can do it. Got a wagon?"

"Yes, six mules if necessary; we only use four, but have extra harness and pack saddles in the wagon. We can go any place a man can ride."

"What's in it, if I'm the right man?" asked Billy.

"Five yellow ones," was the answer, "from the time you start until you get back here."

"That's more 'an five dollars a day would be in greenbacks, hain't it?"

"Yes," said the Captain. "Greenbacks aren't worth a dollar in gold now, you know."

"Got barrels on the side of your wagon fur water?"

"Yes, water, barrels, picks, shovels, ax and everything to do with."

"Well, I reckon I can get you over to the head of Bitter Creek to old Laclede station, on the old stage road, with good grass and water all the time. Lots of dry washes on one stretch and a mighty steep hill at Pine Butte. Thar hain't no road, jest sagebrush and greasewood all the way."

"When can you be ready to start?" asked the Captain.

"Soon as I can get in the saddle. Where's your outfit?"

"Down at Green River."

Billy glanced up at the sun. "Can't do nothin' tonight. Git

your horses out on the old overland trail six miles this side of Green river as early as you can; I'll be thar."

The four-mule team was followed by a man on horseback, leading a gray mare, with a small bell dangling at her neck. The loose horses, that trotted behind, would trot up to and occasionally pass the gray mare, but invariably they stopped, nipped at the salt feed, (a salty herbage relished in the winter by stock and game; it takes the place of salt and is found only on alkali soil), and then trot on and catch up again.

The main herd was strung along the road for a quarter or half mile back, with a man here and there along the line to see that everything was all right.

"This Captain Harding's herd?" asked Billy of the man leading the gray mare, as he rode up.

"Are you the guide that was to meet us six miles out from town?"

"I'm the feller," answered Billy.

"Got any bedding to put in the wagon?"

"Divil the bit," answered the guide, who had the appearance of a mounted arsenal, with a Henry sixteen-shot, magazine rifle across his lap, a heavy U. S. cavalry overcoat behind his saddle, which he slipped on over all at night, and curled up, like a coyote, in the sagebrush, and slept the sleep of a child of nature.

"The Captain said to turn the outfit over to you when we met the guide."

Billy pointed off to the right. "See that strip of scrubby cedars reachin' down from that bit o' bare mountain a couple of miles across there?"

The man nodded.

"Turn your horses off the trail to the right and let them graze; good bunch of grass up thar. I'll tend to the wagon."

"Follow your guide and fear nothin' but my mistakes," continued the mirthful guide, as he motioned the man handling the four ribbons (reins) to pull out of the road and follow him down a steep, barren hill more like a huge bank of old ashes than soil.

Long, low, flat-topped ridges, covered with sprawling red

cedars, sagebrush and greasewood flats below, with numerous dry washes, lay before them, until they turned up a small stream, with green, mountain meadows and fine springs. It was a scene of joy to both man and beast.

"Maybe we are intruding on some one; I saw a tent and some horses up there," said the Captain.

"No, that's mine and Jim King's camp. I see Jim comin' down the canyon now. He's got a deer; get on your horse and we'll go up and get a piece of meat."

"Where's the horses, Jim?" asked Billy as he met King.

"Up the right hand canyon. Why? Want a change?"

"Yes. This is Mr. Harding, a California horseman, and I've agreed to take him over past Blair medders, Mud Springs, Laclede Butte and to the old Laclede stage station, with a wagon and a herd of horses. Can I do it?"

"Yes, it can be done; may have trouble at the Butte but you can double or pack up that big hill."

"That's a fine spring," remarked the Captain.

"It's good and cold but she's harder 'n a rock," remarked King.

"Come down to our camp, Mr. King, and visit us."

"Yes, I will. I'll bring this buck, all but a small piece; I want the hide or you could take it now."

The trucking that followed, without roads, was a complete success. There was good wood, water and green feed, and no dust. The old Captain was highly pleased on reaching Laclede.

He approached Billy and said, "I hate to see you go. My men have heard so much about Bitter Creek thieves and Indians that they are not dependable. I think you ought to stick to me until we cross the North Platte river on the other side of the Rocky mountains. Now, if you see any horse in this outfit that will induce you to go on with us, it's your horse when you start back."

"It's not worth it," said Billy. "I see some good 'ns."

"That's all right, young man, if you want to do it, take the lead."

On this old trail of scant feed, dry camps were necessary.

Water barrels attached to the side of the wagon box were filled. The horses watered in the afternoon, and dry camps were made half-way between watering places, where good feed was usually found off the road a ways. This was owing to strangers hesitating to camp without water. Billy knew distances between water and where the feed was best; this made trailing more pleasant than the men and horses were used to.

Billy always found plenty of fresh meat for the camp without apparently trying to hunt. The skill and prompt, alert reliability of the youngster soon gained favor with the Captain. He was trusted to name the length of each day's drive and the location of camps.

The outfit crossed the mountain by a long drive that day, and camped under the east lea of the great mountain, well back in an opening below an aspen grove. Billy has scouted in advance of the herd and no fresh trails, or signs of Indians were seen.

Supper was about ready. The herd of horses was grazing a half mile below, with one man with the herd. Two others were supposed to be ready, after eating, to take charge and round the horses in, putting them in a more compact form, so two men could ride around them during the night and see that none strayed away; at daybreak they were to allow them to spread out in the direction they were to travel, and feed before the day's drive started.

A mountain squall was in the air; heavy clouds were raking the distant peaks. No horses or men were ready to take charge of the herd, except the Captain, though he had reminded the men to be ready after supper to take charge of the herd for the first half of the night. This was the last but most dangerous camp on the road, and every man had a good reason for not wanting to night-herd that night.

Billy saw the coldfooted shirkers trying to dodge their duty, and wished that he could be boss for a few minutes, as danger was in sight. Buck sniffed the change in the air all of a sudden, ran out in the opening and shouted to the Captain to sig-

nal his man on guard to round in the horses quickly, for a storm was coming, and perhaps hail.

The Captain ran out and swung his coat around over his head and started for his horse. "They'll run sure, for they stampede every chance they get," said the Captain.

Billy knew what these afternoon squalls meant. Not a man made a move to saddle a horse. Billy's hard-ridden horse was on the picket rope, but a few drops of cold rain was warning enough; he sprang on the Captain's horse and dug the spurs into his flanks as soon as the Captain untied him. He shot away down the slope toward the now bunched, moving herd.

Darkness was quickened by the black clouds, which rolled over the great mountain. Billy yelled to the man on guard, and pointed to the opening between the two long strips of timber, that reached down towards them, as he shouted, "That's the place; I'll lead; look out for the tail end, stop at the narrows, it's a natural corral up thar."

The horses broke at the first flash of lightning; the cold rain and hail made it a regular stampede. Billy soon learned he was on a night horse of great speed, that knew even more than he just how to turn the leading beasts. Every lightning flash showed his fleet mount to be right where he belonged. The thundering hoofs and roaring hail could be heard, while the blinding flashes of lightning revealed the rushing mass of frantic beasts, thundering on and on, leaping over sagebrush and boulders. The scene sent a thrill of undescrivable joy through every nerve of horse and rider, that banished all thought of danger. Hope in success, faith in the noble beast under the saddle, and the love of adventurous thrills gave Billy exciting moments, long to be remembered.

The narrows, between the two wind-fallen arms of timber, was passed in safety, with no other visible help than the lightning. Billy leaned to the left and began circling the swifter leading horses more and more, to keep them from crashing into the timber and rocks that now enclosed them, with the exception of the narrow opening through which they had come. The leader soon came in contact with the tail end, and they

began milling round in a circle. The horses soon became quiet after the passing of the black clouds. The two men kept a close watch on the narrow opening, as a bear, wolf, elk, or any wild animal entering the open park might start the herd again.

The stars shone out and the steaming herd in the natural enclosure was in full view. The bewildered herder glanced about and asked, "How far is it to camp?"

Billy pointed down across the timber. "About three quarters straight across," said he.

"I'm lost," remarked the man. It seemed like we ran five miles."

"The way the horses started we had to make a big circle to get in here. If I hadn't of known all about the lay of the land, we never could of did the job. Every time it lightnined I got my eye on the black timber stripes; that, and this horse knowin' jest what to do, did the job."

"Listen!" exclaimed the man. "There, hear it?"

"Keep still," said Billy. "Let's get the direction."

Both men pointed down the slope. "That will be the old Captain, he will be worried to death, we got this herd spoiled right on the start," said the man.

He told how they had held the herd too close to the wagon, and that a picketed horse had got his hind foot over the rope and then they had gotten away, and had been regular runaways ever since.

"I'd better go and look up the old man and let him know the horses are all right," said the man.

"No, I'm keepin' tab on that hollerin'; it's gettin' closer. I'll go ; you can't see no camp fire, nohow, and mout get lost. Besides we don't know who it mout be. Keep yer eye on this gap; if an old grizzly was ter pop into this park at tother side, them horses mout come this way like ol' Nick beatin' tan bark."

Billy Buck rode slowly, and soon got near these occasional calls. He finally answered, rode to one side, listened and watched with the glasses. This jockeying for advantage was kept up by Billy until a man on foot was dimly sighted through his glasses even before he, himself, on horseback, was visible

without glasses. Billy was expecting the Captain on one of the men's horses.

He had seen Bob Davis, alias anything else that came handy, and several of his Montana hold-up gang around town before he left. Bob had given him several inquiring winks, and remarked that Harding's herd would make a fine bunch to draw to on a new ranch. Billy had remarked that the old Captain was paying him big wages, and he intended to stand pat while under pay. This kept Billy on the lookout for whites as well as Indians.

Noticing the six-shooter ready for action in Billy's hand as he came up, he said, "Well, I was suspicious, too. You changed about so much after I hollered and you asked who I was."

The old man was soaking wet, and hoarse from hollering. Laying his hand on the guide's knee, he said, "Horses all gone to h—— I suppose."

"No, everything is all right," answered Billy. "Get on this old work ox of yours and follow me."

"He is all horse, Billy, the best I've ever straddled."

The Captain spoke to his man, who told him of the run and how they landed in a natural corral, when everything was black as sin, except the lightning.

The Captain rode up around the herd next to the timber and rocks and returned. "Was this an accident, boys?"

"No," answered Billy, "that horse of yours did most of it."

"Did you know this place was here before?" asked the old man.

"Yes. Jim King and I have been all over here huntin'. It's only 'bout a day's pack down to the new railroad from here."

Billy told the old Captain the reason he remembered the place so well was that he had camped up in the pocket once, when the Indians were worse than now, and had kept under cover until dark and picketed his horse up on the grassy flat next to the timber, and slept in the brush, where he could see out. He told how he kept waking up and feeling uneasy, and lay and watched his horse, which had stopped eating and stood looking across the creek and timber to the right.

"I just couldn't sleep, and got scared and crawled out and worked my horse back in the edge of the young quaking asp saplings and tied him up. I couldn't hear, or see, a thing, but the horse seemed uneasy too. It got on my nerves. At the peep of day I slipped out on foot, through the jungle of fallen trees and young aspens, to the opening; there I found a heavy, fresh Indian trail going up across the mountain towards the Ute country. The pony droppings were wet and cold."

"There were no lodge pole marks dragging along each side of the trail, where they would show, so I knew that it was a war party without squaws and lodges," continued Billy. "I spotted that place, and it popped into my mind when I jumped on your horse. There was no time to explain things, the storm was there and not a second to lose. I just went before I knowed it."

"You saved my herd," said the Captain, "by your impulsive act and I will not forget it."

The sun came up clear and warm the following morning. The horses were allowed to pass out of the narrow neck of woods between the two men, who held them back, feeding them through between the men, one, two, and four abreast. The Captain sat with his saddle string in his fingers, tying a knot every time a hundred horses had passed, without ever taking his eye from the horses; if one or more should pass, by chance, behind one of the two men, they kept count of them. When all had passed the number after the last knot was tied was marked on the saddle horn before he spoke.

"Three behind," called the man.

"That makes it," said the Captain. "They're all here, boys."

The herd was pointed parallel with the road and allowed to feed until they showed an inclination to travel, then a man led out in the lead of the herd, which followed the pointer, whose business it was to set the pace they were to travel, and to switch the herd off on to good feed when necessary.

Good feed was struck about noon and the horses were inclined to feed and pointed out on the side to graze. The wagon pulled up and the cook dropped the tall end gate of the wagon,



which was really a drop door, to the mess box, and it made a table when it was down. The men rode up and waded into the bacon and chili, or California blue or lead colored beans, yeast powder bread, and dried fruit, which the cook had prepared before leaving the last camp. A cup of water from the faucet of the water barrel, fastened alongside the wagon box, took the place of coffee.

Billy talked with the Captain, then led off down the grade headed for the North Platte river, followed by the four-mule team in a trot. The old trail was hard and bare as a barnyard. Billy motioned the driver to swing off the road down to the timber on the river. Billy galloped down ahead, looking for feed and water.

He came out of the willows and saw a band of elk. An old bull, with rocking antlers, that brought up the rear of his band of cows, headed up towards the approaching wagon. Billy was in the act of giving chase when a splash in the water caused him to turn around. An old bull elk tore out of the willows and was about to run over him. The bull, startled, halted and fell, within forty feet of the lucky guide.

After sticking and bleeding the old monster, Billy rode out of the scattering cottonwood trees. He motioned the herd off the road and directed the wagon to the river bend.

"What were them, elk or deer?" asked the cook, who drove the team.

"Elk," was Billy's unconcerned answer.

"My, I wish you had killed that one with the big horns. I would give a month's wages to of seen that fellow dead."

"Look out, look out, cook, don't get reckless. Yer mout have ter work fur a month 'thout pay," cautioned Billy, as he guided the wagon through the big cottonwoods handy to the woods where the old bull was. "Unhook and turn your donks to grass. I'm sure Captain will lap over here. Good feed and water and no danger an' the horses need a good rest after their long drives."

"Here, why didn't you tell me you had killed one of them big things, by jing. I never heard you shoot. Holy-smoke, I never

saw such horns. Shot right smack 'tween the eyes, how come you to do that?"

"Had to do it or get run over," said Billy.

Billy and the old Captain, who was an expert himself, separated all the muscles from the hams and shoulders, without cutting the meat, dropped them into boiling brine for a few seconds, which made them fly proof, and then laid them on the pole scaffold over the smoking fire, to dry the outer layer, and they were ready to sack. This process made the meat keep fresh in that climate, as long as it lasted.

The Captain saved the seven point antlers, fastened them on top of the mess box, and took the pelt to go under his bed.

"That is the fattest wild animal I ever saw, except a bear," said the Captain. "Save that tallow, cook, to fry your half-dried elk steak in; it will be a change from strong sow belly grease."

Billy had saddled and was getting ready to return back home. He was having trouble with the new bronco he had gotten for the last lap of his trip as guide, when one of the men, who had failed to go out when the storm was coming on, laughed, and made a remark about the bronco licking Billy out.

Billy dropped his work, turned to the camp, and stood silent for a time, with his eye on the man who had made the remark. Billy began to laugh aloud, and said, "Just like Nigger Ned, who wanted to be somethin', but hain't got no sand ter do nothin' with, have ye?"

When no one accepted the challenge, Billy turned to the Captain and said, "Say, Captain, if a feller never made himself and he's a no-account shirk and coward, he's not to blame for it, is he?"

The Captain shook his head and walked away with the young man "Billy you saved my herd. It pays to be honest. Take this horse from me as a present. If you keep this horse picketed you will always have the other one I gave you for piloting us over the mountain, they are mates." The old Captain laid his hand on the youngster's shoulder, and said, "I am an old man, full of experiences; you are young and still in the school of

men and things; curb your temper, fight the temptation to get something for nothing, it doesn't pay. Truth and reliability are the backbone of manhood. I'm glad to have met you. Good-by."

Billy was speechless, but the old man understood as he watched the youngster hit the long, lonesome trail for the western slope of the great Rocky mountains.

## CHAPTER X

### BILLY BUCK AS GUIDE



CAPTAIN HARDING had hardly turned from saying good-by to Billy Buck, who had served him so nobly as a guide in crossing the great Rocky mountain divide, where the hostile Sioux were most dreaded by the passing tenderfoot, when a "Hello, there," came from the opposite bank of the North Platte river.

"Is that one of your men pulling out up there, leading the two cayuses?" asked the stranger, who introduced himself as Colonel Myers, from Texas, with a herd of auger-horned, wild steers.

"No," answered the Captain. "It's a fellow they call Billy Buck, who piloted me across the continental divide, and is returning to the Green river country with the two broncos I gave him for the job."

"Was he any good?" asked the Colonel.

"Good! There's none better. I tell you he was the cheapest help I ever had in my life."

"Wonder if he'd give me a lift on his return trip?" asked the Colonel.

"Do you want him?" asked the Captain. "Better stop him quick, if you do. If ever he gets out of hearing he is gone for good. He's a mover."

The Colonel galloped out in the open from the timber and began firing signal shots. The guide halted, looked back and saw the herd of cattle spreading out over the river bottom up at the old Bennett crossing of the North Platte river.

Billy took the hint and galloped back, met the Colonel and was hired to Mr. Myers almost before he knew it.

"What kinder cattle you'ns got?" asked Billy, as he could see

they were a lively bunch, though of an odd color, as they spread out over the bottom.

"They're not like any cattle you have ever seen, young man, unless you have dodged mesquite brush down on the Mexican border."

"Mesquite brush. What kind o' brush is that, mister?"

"Oh, it's a kind of a low, spreading, shrubby, leguminous tree, with leaves like those of a black locust tree, and has beans on it, which fattens cattle, deer and other animals in the fall and winter seasons."

The Missouri sand digger shook his head. "Don't know nothin' 'bout it."

"Say, guide, be careful when around these old, outlawed steers. You darsent get off to cinch up your saddle when around them. They'll either fight or stampede, never been broke to men on foot. Be careful and watch how the boys do it and you will be all right."

The Colonel wanted to know what the chances were for killing some fat elk like the one he killed for Captain Harding's camp.

"That's my business," answered the young hunter.

"Yes, but I would like to kill an old bull elk myself," said the Colonel. We have three thousand old outlawed steers in our herd and five hundred yearling heifers, which we use for beef and to quiet the steers, but the boys would like the change from lean beef to fat elk. I would like the elk antlers of my own killing."

"How would a black-tailed buck deer do? They're easiest found and fatter 'n possums," said Billy.

"I want elk," said the Colonel. "I've killed deer."

The dry camp was arranged for, and Billy pulled out ahead of the herd with his new boss. They skirted the timber patches off to the left along the foot of the great mountain. They galloped along parallel with the road below the timbered brakes, searching favorable places with Billy's field glasses for the desired game. The Colonel was anxious to go up among the steep, shrubby banks and places, which looked like there might be game there.

"No." The expert explained that he could hunt a hundred acres of ground with the glasses, down where they were, quicker than they could hunt one acre up there, where they could not see any distance for brush.

After many halts and sweeping favorable places above many times, with the glasses, Billy spoke slowly, "I've found him, boss. He's a lunker and I spect he's all by himself."

"Let me have a look at him with your glasses. I am getting nervous right now," said the Colonel.

"Stand behind me," commanded the hunter. "Look right over my glasses. See them craggy rocks on the point half way up the hill?"

"Yes."

"Turn your eye to the right and a little up the hill from the rocks. See a patch of dark colored sarvis berry brush, 'bout fifty steps from the rocks?"

"I think I can," answered the Colonel.

"Now take the glasses, squat down, rest your elbows on your knees, get the focus first on the rocks and search for his big horns; he's laying down right below that big bush."

"My, what strong glasses, and such a big field; it's no wonder you can hunt with them. I see him! I see him!" said the Colonel.

"Did you ever kill any elk?" asked Billy.

The Colonel said he had killed deer and buffalo but had never yet killed an elk.

"You mustn't shoot if you get the buck ager. Just wait till you get over it."

The elk got up and the Colonel got a good shot and the bull tore off down the hill. Billy watched him until he disappeared in the quaking asp grove below.

"You've got him," said Billy, as he took up the bloody trail. "You've shot too high, I 'spect; see that frothy yellor blood; it comes out 'n the lights, but he'll tumble all right."

The Colonel informed Billy, after they had found the dead bull, that he had been almost angry because Billy hadn't shot

the bull as he tore down the hill, but now he was pleased, for the old bull had fallen from his gun alone.

The bull was turned, head down the hill, stuck and pumped out by Billy placing his foot in the monster's flank, swaying the limber carcass back and forth, which caused the blood to rush out of the opening below.

"Got a foreman that knows what he wants, Colonel?" asked Billy.

"Yes. Ben Burley is a good, level-headed cowman. Why?"

"Cause I'm worth more to you sum'ers else, that's why."

The Colonel straightened up and stared inquiringly at the young guide and said, "I need you here to help me with this animal. Don't you think you had ought to do that first."

"No!" was the emphatic reply. "I got my own work, what you hired me to do and it's gettin' late. I hain't goin' to neglect my work fur what you can do yourself."

A trifle suspicious, the Colonel asked, "Why did you ask about Ben?"

"Kase I wanter hurry down and see 'bout things, and have the wagon sent up close here, and a campin' place arranged, so I would know where to find it if I happen not to get back afore dark."

The guide saw the Colonel was a bit suspicious, and explained to him the necessity of knowing everything possible of what was going on around camp before dark. He said it took time and horse-flesh to know that; and if he allowed a band of renegade whites, or Indians, who were on the warpath, or with a bunch of stolen horses, to run into them and make trouble, he would be called a darned poor scout and blamed for neglect.

"If you should lose your saddle horses, Colonel, it would be my fault, fur it's a guide and scout's place ter know what's goin' on 'roun' the country afore dark. I can't know 'thout hard ridin' and usin' the glasses."

The Colonel, reflecting over what Captain Harding had told him about the youngster, and what he could see, his cautious suspicions vanished and he told the guide to go ahead.

Taking his double bitted tomahawk from his belt, Billy said,

"Here, use this thick edge fur choppin' the skull across here so your horns will be fast together, and use it to chop open the brisket. Don't use the sharp edge on bones, that's fur choppin' tent poles, picket pins and the like. I'll have the wagon up here right away."

Billy fixed things with the foreman, and hit the trail west, watching for suspicious pony tracks, dust clouds, or smoke from the highest points with his glasses. This precautionary mode of operation was kept up continuously. As Billy already knew where wood, water and feed were the best, he lost little time in that direction.

On reaching the rolling, timberless foothills, after crossing the great divide later on Billy was well in advance of the big herd near Tub Spring on the old trail, when trouble of unknown dimensions loomed up ahead.

After much maneuvering, and the use of his glasses from favorable concealed positions, he decided, from what he could see, that it must be a small band of friendly White River Utes, surrounded by fifteen or twenty of the Sioux Indians, as the two tribes were quarrelsome at that time.

Billy got the location well in hand, spotted a place as near the battle as possible, where the herd and camp could be held in safety, and hit the back trail for the lead cattle.

He swung off of the road, met the pointer (man guiding the lead cattle), and said, "Swing the cattle off to the right hand, where I have piled sagebrush in the trail. Keep them close in, don't let nothin' get on that high ridge to the west, we may have ter be thar all night. How far back is the Colonel?"

"That's him on that ridge."

"Signal him up while my horse gets a rest."

A few swings of the pointer's hat, and the Colonel came galloping up. Billy hastily explained everything, and described the lay of the land as they rode along with the pointer.

"You say about fifteen or twenty hostile Sioux and the Utes are friendly to the whites. My boys can lick twenty Indians in that many minutes, if we can get at them; we are all Indian fighters."



"Yes, if it is Utes," said Billy. "Don't you see it mout be white men with packs, or it mout be pony thieves with stolen ponies from the Sioux, and got ketched at it. I didn't have no time ter find out for the herd mout run right inter them. That's what made me hurry back afore I knowed all 'bout them."

The cattle were turned off as Billy directed and the location approved by the Colonel. Cowpunchers had galloped back to the wagon for guns and ammunition.

"Here's your field glasses and extra cartridges, Colonel. Where are the divils?" asked the man, as the others galloped up to where Billy and the Colonel were planning how to get by the trouble without taking chances of losing cattle or men.

After a short council with his men, the Colonel left Ben Burley, his foreman, and part of the men with the herd, while he and Billy lit out for the scene of action.

On reaching the scene and making a short survey, of the situation, with glasses, the Colonel decided on an immediate attack from the north, with most of the men, while some of the men were to come up on the hill to the south.

"This will make the Sioux think they're being cut off from their home country and cause a hasty stampede for the Sweet Water country. This will make it safe for us to pull right out and reach water before the cattle get uneasy for a drink.

"Are you sure you saw a white man where the horses are held in the surrounded camp, Billy?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes," answered the guide, "I saw hats anyway.

"Bob Ship, you and Jeff show up over there on those hills next to the road, where the devils can see you. Be careful and don't start a scrap unless it's necessary.

Billy and the Colonel's outfit unexpectedly ran right into a secluded bunch of cached ponies. The lone Sioux in charge was making his getaway without ponies, straight ahead. Billy's running shots kicked up the dry dust too close to suit the Colonel.

"Give him time! Give the devil time to warn the others," shouted the Colonel from the rear, who was followed by his men in a long string, single file, some fifty yards apart.

The long ridge ahead revealed the fleeing reds, riding for dear life, and signaled the other Indians. The Sioux saw the signal and were making tracks to the north. Continued puffs of white smoke from a rocky point some distance from the surrounded camp spoke for itself. Some of the whites were doing good work. The Sioux flight was on. Bob and Jeff were taking long shots at the fleeing Sioux on their side of the attack.

Billy and one of Colonel Myers' men shadowed the Sioux on their northern flight to make sure they would not return.

The Colonel turned the bunch of captured ponies over to the besieged camp of two white men, and a negro and a Mexican, who claimed the ponies had been taken from them by the Indians. The Colonel needed cow ponies and paid them five hundred for twelve head, the pick of the bunch. The Colonel suspected that the ponies had been stolen from the hostile Sioux, but that made no difference to him.

The Colonel immediately passed the scene of danger in safety with the herd, while Billy and the man looked after the roving band of Sioux, who headed straight for the Sweet Water country beyond the Red desert. When Billy and his assistant intersected the herd, they reported everything O. K.

On reaching Billy's camp near Green River, the job was turned over to his partner, Jim King, better known as Club-footed King. He agreed to help the Colonel as far as Raft river, Idaho, where Myers had agreed, by contract, to turn over these old, auger-horned, outlawed steers to a California party at twenty-seven dollars and fifty cents (\$27.50) a head. Payment was to be made in gold upon delivery of the cattle on Raft river.

The country was full of questionable characters, of all colors.

The Central Pacific railroad had just made its connection with the Union Pacific. The nearest railroad station to Raft river was Kelton, Utah, a small station at the head of Salt Lake.

Bank checks and drafts were not as negotiable as they were later on, and the express company did not want to be respon-

sible for the money at that point, and there was no bank to handle the cash.

A hot air storm occurred between the California contractor and the Colonel, so the Texan got his back up so high he demanded the gold payment, as per contract, where the cattle were to be delivered on Raft river, some fifty miles north of Kelton.

The Californian was equal to the occasion. A train came with men, dogs, guns, and heavy boxes of canned fruit and ammunition red hot for a hunting and fishing trip to the wilds. The ruse was a complete success. Myers got the cash on Raft river, and lit out with his pack outfit, after dark, for some unknown station, with his yellow golden eagles, without being held up. A tip from his guide, no doubt, saved a battle and the probable loss of the coin. No one suspected that these heavy boxes of the hunters had contained the price of the cattle herd in yellow gold.

During King's trip with the herd he heard much camp gossip about the two white men, the Mexican and negro, who were besieged by the Sioux, back on the trail near Tub Springs. King kept still, but he had his suspicions that the two white men were Tip A. Galt and J. L. Pease. If that was so the Mexican would be Taresa, as these three were hooked up together in many shady pony deals.

King thought at once that Ned, the supposed tenderfoot nigger, had become naturalized and had joined the bunch.

But Bob Ship, one of the Texas cowpunchers said, "I knew Tan Mex, the minute he came down out of them rocks all bloody, with his arm bandaged up. I tell you it was lucky for them boys that Tan was with them."

"The nigger is a fighter, is he? Where did he come from?" asked King.

"He told me he was born in the Ozarks. But I'm bettin' he first saw daylight in Mexico, for he speaks Mexican as well as I do," said Bob. "A fighter! I guess yes, if he don't lose his head and get stampeded in the start. He's the craziest, fight-enist nigger you ever did see. He's a regular clown actor.

I'm bettin' he gets some of his cunning, crazy freaks from Mexican-Indian blood. He's black but he hain't all nigger nohow."

King learned that the nigger was at home anywhere from Chihuahua, Mexico, to Pacos, Texas, where Bob said he worked with Tan on what's now called the Good-night ranch. He said that the nigger was an expert roper, good rider and a dandy cowpuncher, and loyal to his foreman.

"Tan once preached a sermon to a lot of drunken niggers and Mexicans over on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande river, on Sunday killed a Mexican, on Monday took his horse and swam the river, and came up on the Pacos river, where we worked together," said Bob. "Finally it was hinted around by some of the white punchers, that did not want to work with a Mexican nigger, that Tan had killed a brother of a priest over in Mexico, and the Catholics were going to lynch him. Tan was uneasy as he had heard there was a new priest nosing around beggin'.

"The joke worked fine," continued Bob. "The boys gathered up one night and began to maneuver around on horseback in front of the bunk houses. Tan got panicky when he saw the crowd, and some one said, 'Tis the mob.' Well, sir, that fool nigger jumped through the back window of the bunk house and the outfit lost a good horse and rider that night. I never seen or heard of Tan any more until the old Black Fox, as we used to call him, came down out of them rocks, and asked me, in Spanish, to never let the Colonel know who he was."

This let King down easy, for it couldn't be Ned, as he had at first thought. Ned was too big a coward and he wasn't smart enough to be a Tan Mex, if he trained a thousand years under Tip Galt, and all the rest of the Bitter Creek thieves.

"It just can't be Ned Huddleston," King said to Frop, with whom he had stayed over night, at American Falls, while on his return trip home from Raft river. Frop's outfit was fishing in the Big Snake river.

King had known Ned as a real tenderfoot nigger, from the day he arrived in the cook shack on the railroad at Carmicle's

cut on Bitter Creek, below Rock Springs, Wyoming. Ned had proved himself a child among the roughhouse gunmen. He failed as an Indian fighter, and he had allowed old Pony Beater, a Ute buck, to steal his squaw, and tie him up, leaving him to freeze, without a fight.

"I don't care," said Frop. "He run a whizzer on the tie camp up at Green River and got the money."

Frop's squaw stuck her head in the lodge. "Indian come, Ike."

The Indians were from Fort Hall up the river. They were looking for a nigger with stolen ponies. They said the Shoshones, from Washakie on the little Wind river, over on the other side of the Great mountain, had asked their help in finding a black man, who had stolen a lot of ponies, and killed four of their bucks.

"That's Ned," said Frop to King, after the Indians had gone on down the river.

"I don't believe it," said King. "Ned doesn't know that country over there; besides Ned's too big a coward to take chances like that."

"Say, don't you remember after the Bob David hold-up gang shot Charley Sarell, my squaw's brother, while he was in the barber chair in old Geboo's Barber Shop, at Green River, that I left camp right away."

"Yes. I spotted the move and kept still," said King.

"Now listen. After I left, Johnny Carnes told me that he had seen Tip Galt and Taresa. They were inquiring for Ned, and he had told them all about Ned's losing his outfit, squaw and all. Galt said he was going to our camp. He never came. Ned left our camp about the same time. None of them were ever heard of any more until we saw Galt up here on Ross's Fork as we came over here. He said nothing about Ned. But asked if I knew what became of Old Pony Beater and his squaw. I told him about the squaw's return with Ned's outfit, and that Old Pony Beater had been drowned and the squaw was going over to her tribe. Now where was Ned?"

"I pass," said King. "Galt's the sagebrush king of Bitter

Creek thieves. I don't think Galt would kill him for his money, do you, Ike?"

"No, there's honor even among thieves, you know, and these daring, courageous kind are usually loyal to their own kind."

King hurried home. Billy might need him to keep camp while he guided some one else across the mountain, and there was money in it outside of the salary. Trading one fat pony for two or three played-out, sore-backed ones, which were soon ready to trade to the next cow driver for lame cattle, made it a snap.

## CHAPTER XI

### RENEGADE BEDLAMIZE INDIAN CAMPS



ED HUDDLESTON, the very much misunderstood, tenderfoot, colored rover of the frontier wilds, had made himself the laughing stock of his white friends in the squaw-man's tepee village. The mishaps that had brought about his disaster might have happened to any one of the seasoned white mountaineers in camp, under the same environment; but Ned's mishap was not looked upon in that light by these old-time, pioneer squawmen. Even the squaws jested him about his not killing Old Pony Beater for taking his squaw. Ned clung to the principle that it paid one to keep one's mouth shut about "who was who." He had taken his chidings in silence, shaken hands with every soul in this "Frop-Fogerty village," missing not one, and rode out of camp, leading his pack pony, giving no sign of his future action concerning the loss of his squaw, Tickup, and his three best ponies.

Ned had notions of his own how he was to get back at the Ute buck for taking his squaw, Tickup, and her little girl, Mincy. It wasn't the loss of his ponies and the squaw alone that hurt Ned's pride. No! It was the girl and the fact that he had allowed the lone Indian buck to get the drop on him, disarm him, and make his unwilling squaw tie him fast to the cedar log, that hurt.

Ned rode once more up to Green River. There he met Tip Galt and Taresa, a Mexican, who was no stranger to him, especially when they were alone.

Johnny Carnes had told them, in S. I. Field's store up at Green River, where they bought their pack loads of grub, all about Ned's trouble in losing his squaw to Old Pony Beater, her former Ute buck.

Ned realized that colored men were not numerous in the mountains, and that he was handicapped when it came to nosing around for desired information, especially among peaceable Indians, who eyed all strangers with suspicion.

Galt and Taresa sympathized with Ned, for he had been a former customer of theirs, when they sold shady ponies. Ned had never asked any questions about the ownership of the ponies; but paid cash and kept his mouth shut. This suited Galt, who was trying to persuade Ned to go down to their camp, near Dutch John's Spring, which was close to Little Hole, with them, and finish up the winter with his outfit.

Ned hesitated and gazed at the great, snowy peaks of the Uinta Range.

It was plain to Galt that Ned had something unusual on his mind. He surmised that Ned's thoughts were beyond those mountains, among the Ute Indians, and said, "Better go along, Ned. It's right on the trail to the Uinta Reservation."

"What fo' you say dat, Mistah Tip?"

"Oh, just because Taresa, or some of us, will be going over that way before long. Taresa wants to see Tom Crowley, who is over that way some place."

This brought a smile from Ned, for he remembered Tom Crowley as the firewater peddler among the Utes. Tickup, Ned's squaw, had told him all about Crowley and the Madam helping her over the river, and aiding her in escaping from Old Pony Beater's abuse before she became Ned's squaw.

Ned saw the prospect of getting in communication with Tickup, the Shoshone squaw, who had run away from the brutal abuse of the drunken Ute buck, Old Pony Beater, before she fell in with Ned, who had given her a good home.

A wink and a nod from Taresa, who had been a partner of Ned's long before this, down on the Rio Grande, settled it. The disgruntled Ned fell in at Tip Galt's side and rode off with them.

On leaving a rocky ridge, to ride where pony tracks were visible, Galt halted the outfit and put rawhide moccasins on all the ponies, then handed Ned moccasins for his ponies.



"How you make dem trackless boots, so nice, Mistah Galt?" Ned asked, as he put the moccasins on his ponies, like a veteran at the business.

"Oh, we just cut out a circle of green skins, slip it over a pony's foot while wet, draw it around below the pastern-joint and above the hoof, with a draw string, allow it to dry and take its shape, then remove and the moccasin is ready for use."

Each pony's foot was thus muffled, so no pony track was left behind in crossing the sandy, bare flat ahead. Thus the camp was reached, with little sign left behind that might lead to some unwelcome visitor in the outlaw's rendezvous.

Ned was not long in learning how Tom Crowley got his supply of poison corn juice for Indian traffic. Ned's feet were not so tender but what he noticed the presto change Charley Powe, a Mexican, who assisted Crowley in dealing with the Indians. Powe was in camp, on their arrival, but left immediately with Taresa and four, heavy packed ponies. Taresa returned without Charley, within an hour and with light packs.

Ned appeared to be blind; at least he seemed to neither see, or care about what went on around him. He soon learned that the Mexican and Indian languages were common in camp. Ned picked up the Mexican tongue so readily that it brought many a snicker from Taresa. The two became fast friends before anybody knew it.

Business opened up over in the Brush Creek canyon. Indians were going and coming. Powe saw that he got the red man's annuity and that the Utes got bottles of forty rod whiskey.

Ned had told his secret to Taresa, who fixed it with Powe and Crowley. They learned that Old Pony Beater had left the reserve to look for his runaway Shoshone squaw, and neither of them had ever been seen or heard of after they left the Uinta Reservation.

Galt and his gang knew every foot of the country; and spoke the different Indian languages, as well as Mexican.

They wanted Ned to meet them, in the full of the next moon, at a designated place, which he could find without attracting

any attention. They agreed to find the squaw and put Old Pony Beater to sleep for him.

It was while on this planned trip to meet over on a branch of Ross's Fork, in Idaho, that Galt, by chance, met up with Ike Frop, who was looking for one of Bob Davis' gang of road agents who had killed Charley Sarell in Green River, Woming.

Frop told Galt of the return of Ned's squaw, Tickup, and little Mincy, with all of Ned's outfit. He said, that on learning of Ned's departure, she had crossed the great mountain to her own tribe near Fort Washakie.

After Galt's interview with Frop, he found Ned waiting in his lonely camp for the others to arrive. Days had seemed like weeks to Ned while he waited in seclusion for his pals, who dropped in two at a time.

Ned wanted the squaw and little Mincy. He saw in his vision the road to wealth. He could become a "Tom Crowley" and hid under his squaw's blanket while the cash was coming in for the firewater.

Galt had picked up Casamero, a smooth fighting Mexican, a knight of the sagebrush. So now there were five men in the bunch. Though they kept picks, shovels and gold pans, both in camp and on the trail, in full view on the packs, Galt was suspicious of every scrutinizing eye, although these prospectors' tools made it plain to any one they met up with that they were prospectors.

When Galt planned this meeting on Ross's Fork to look for Ned's squaw, neither he nor any of his outfit knew, at that time, of the squaw's return to Frop's village, with her report of Old Pony Beater's death. They supposed, of course, that Old Pony would take her right back home to the Uinta Reservation. So, when he learned that neither Old Pony Beater, or the squaw, had showed up among the Utes, Galt reasoned that Old Pony had dreaded the wrath of his own tribe, as well as that of his squaw's tribe, over among the Shoshones. So he would probably take her over among the Banocs, around Fort Hall, thought Galt, and there was where he would find both Old Pony and the squaw.

But now, since Galt had met Frop and learned that Old Pony was drowned, and that the squaw had gone to her tribe, things were different. A council was held and the plans changed. Galt's outfit backed up over the divide east into Wyoming. Loaded up with heavy packs of the red man's choice of fighting whiskey, they made a night drive, cached the red eye after dark near the Shoshone Reservation. This cache was for protection against a soldier's raid.

Casamero headed for the reservation, where he had many friends, to work up trade; and to try to find Ned's squaw.

Galt and the others went to prospecting higher up in the mountain.

This was not the best place to peddle booze among the reds for several reasons. The soldiers were near-by agents, and the shoulder-strapped, military highbrows were all friends of J. K. More, who had the exclusive right to run a trading post over here. This monopolistic bunch of favorites passed booze over the bar, at an enormously high price, where all were served except the Red Americans. He took his on the side. Galt knew this and was willing to accommodate them with a few bottles.

Casamero, the smooth Mexican, had worked the reservation. He found Ned's squaw hooked up with a fancy young buck, who had shed his blanket and sported a red necktie. He stepped around like a peacock in full feather. This handsome young sport was the apple of Tickup's eye.

"She couldn't be pried loose from that young rooster with the big end of a new lodge pole, Ned," said Casamero, on his first trip up to camp.

"Dat peacock red debble took dat woman jest fo' dem good hosses of mine, and dah is all my buffalo robes, yes sah! An' dem big, snuff colo'd Califor'na thuty-five pound blankets, with big yaller stripes 'cross boff ends. You know dem kind what lasts longer 'n two men's lives. Did Tickup say she wouldn't be my squaw no mo', Mistah Casamero?"

"Your squaw! Ned, she's froze fast. She's as proud of that

young buck as he was of the half bottle I tipped to him tryin' to get next to the squaw for you."

Ned was not satisfied with Casamero's report. He clung to the belief that if he could see the squaw himself he could persuade her to run away and meet him some place. So down he went and met defeat on the spot. Then he offered Tickup five ponies for little Mincy. Tickup's young buck was in for the trade but the squaw refused. Ned then wanted his three ponies and all his trappings. The squaw told her buck and he and Ned locked horns. Ned had the young buck down and was spoiling his face with heavy blows. The lodge was torn down and fell in the fire. Little Mincy howled for help. The squaw rushed in and began hacking Ned about the head with an old stone ax that lay around camp to crack bones with. One of her blows cut Ned's left ear off, all except the lobe.

Soon Ned realized what he was up against; he was about to be lashed to a stake, while great arm loads of sagebrush were being piled around him. The whole village was howling, "Burn the black nigger."

Johnny Simo, a half-breed Sioux Indian, who had been raised by the whites and turned renegade, had just ridden into the village from the post. He rushed to the scene, on horseback, shouting that he would go to the post for soldiers if they burned the man.

A brother of Fogerty's squaw, and many other bucks and squaws, recognized Ned as the black man they had met the fall before at Pacific Springs. They remembered Ned as a friend of Frop, Fogerty, and all their white friends at that meeting. Ned had paid them liberally for a pony, lodge and buffalo robes. Frop had promised to get Ned a squaw and Tickup was the one he had gotten for him, and she belonged to Ned because Ned had given his best horse for her.

One of the squaws shouted that Ned had paid two prices for a pair of beaded leggins and moccasins. Another said that Tickup had told her that she never knew what a good home was until she kept lodge for Ned. Still another old mother was howling that Tickup was to blame for living with a nigger,

that she had taken the nigger's ponies and lodge and bought the boy with them, when her own daughter wanted the boy for her buck.

"If you burn the black man, burn Tickup, too," shouted this old woman's jealous daughter.

Ned's half of the row switched to the Indians whom he had made friends with through his liberality the fall before. The half-meant ruse by the partly civilized Indians to get Ned out of the village before something serious happened worked to a finish. While Ned's friends, pretending to be enemies, were scuffling with those who really meant him harm, they got possession of the would-be roast and let him escape. Ned was followed by a howling mob in the darkness. But there was no roast coon that night; the fire was never started. Ned was gone.

The Indians settled down, formed little family groups, and moved up along the mountain streams, hunting and fishing.

The baffled Ned lived alone in seclusion among the rocks, nursing his tender ear, and more willing to listen to his leader's advice. On one of Galt's visits to see how Ned was coming on he threw down two good robes, Ned's California blankets, and his six-shooter, which Old Pony Beater had relieved him of when he tied him up.

"How you get dem things o' mine, Mistah Galt? Yes, sah, an' if dat hain't me old, reli'ble six-shooter, what I dropped when I caught my foot on dat blamed dog's rope. Tell me quick, Mistah, fo' I get too anxious about it."

"Don't ask too many questions, Ned. Just think about King, Billy, Frop, Fogerty and the Shoshone Indians you met up on the big divide in the South Pass on the old Oregon trail at Pacific Springs, and remember that most Indians never forget a friendly favor."

"May de good Lawd bless ever' one o' dem good Shoshones what we give so many o' dem big antelopes to up dah dat day when I lose mah head."

These Shoshone Indians were scattered along the face of the great mountain, in hunting camps and groups, awaiting the

good time that the Mexican, Casamero, who was the Indian's go-between in the tribe, had promised them. When the precious firewater arrived a few spare bottles were given to the war chiefs, to lighten the supply and tone up the appetites of the thirsty, uneasy ones among the Indians.

The logical moment had arrived. Trusties from all neighboring camps came to the designated place with the price. Each received his camp's allotment without being able to say who left the poison where he laid his money. The left hand knew not what the right was doing. Uncle Sam was on guard, but the packs were lightened and Galt's ponies rested.

The following morning, Indian bucks, dead to the world, lay like poisoned rats about each camp. Squaws anxiously strode about the grassy land, in search of ponies; not one was to be seen. All had disappeared during the night before.

Casamero's and Johnny Simo's ponies were gone with the rest. This was a ruse, for these two renegades had been instrumental in causing the disappearance of the ponies. The question was: Where was Casamero, the Mexican, and Johnny Simo, the Sioux renegade?

They both lay dead drunk in the war chief's camp, apparently as innocent as new born papooses. They had nothing intelligible to say, but merely lay and muttered for death to strike the unseen hand that had sold them bottles, with nothing in them but wobbly legs and headaches.

"A man's a fool that touches the blame stuff," said Casamero. "It's the short trail to poverty, grief and hell," muttered the aroused Mexican.

While the noble warriors rolled in their own spew, squaws hoofed it over the rocks to the next camps, only to find the same drunken, harmless condition in each camp. The day was spent in maddened lectures by the squaws to stupefied half drunk bucks, who were told to get out and find the ponies.

"Oh, they're just gone down to the valley where they wintered," was the usual murmured answer. "Heap sick, no ride pony," was the excuse.

Casamero was too much of a business Mexican to tell the

drunken dupes that all that was the matter with himself, was that he was tired from helping Galt, Taresa, Pease and Nigger Ned round up the Indian's ponies the evening before. And that the ponies were hitting the sagebrush in the direction of the Sioux, as a ruse, and were a hundred miles from their camp at that very minute.

The chill of the evening, after the sun had settled behind the great mountain, and the wrath of the squaws, finally aroused anything towards finding the ponies until another morning appeared.

During the flush of the drunken scene, Tickup's drunken young buck had insisted, and succeeded, in getting her to join him in emptying his bottle.

While she lounged in her lodge, some one tried to steal her girl Mincy out under the lodge wall. She pulled the girl back with a threat.

Her first thought was of Ned, for he had threatened to steal the girl. She slipped the pistol from Clouse Caseburg's belt, while he lay drunk at the foot of her pallet. Tickup peeked out in the dark and dimly saw the thief making for the red willows just below the lodge. She followed him and as he lay on his stomach drinking from the brook, she put the pistol to the back of his head and fired.

Some one yelled, "Stop that shooting." But as shooting was common during the drunken brawl, little attention was paid to it.

Tickup threw the pistol in the willows and ran back to her lodge. In her dazed half drunken condition, she had killed her own buck, thinking that he was dead. But she did not know it until he was found dead at the creek the following morning. Caseburg's pistol, with one chamber empty, was picked up, where it had been thrown in the willows, near the scene.

Clouse Caseburg was found laying across Tickup's pallet, drunk, and with an empty pistol scabbard in his belt.

Between the killing and discovery of Tickup's young buck's body, she became uneasy about his absence, and suspicioned that he might be down in the old mother's lodge. She expected

to find her flighty buck with the young squaw, who had accused her of buying the young buck away from her with the nigger's ponies.

The battle was on. The old mother and her daughter beat up Tickup, scratched her face, bloodied her nose, tore her hair and sent her home on the fly.

Tickup was in a drunken, jealous rage. She had been refused admittance to the young squaw's lodge. This refusal satisfied Tickup that her boy buck was there with the young squaw. Something had to be done. She grabbed a butcher knife and back she rushed to the scene of her defeat.

The first round of hair pulling aroused several bucks, who came to the young squaw's rescue. They saved her scalp, and were listening to tongue music of why some one should be killed, when two bucks from the home village galloped up and reported the finding of three dead bucks down at the foot of the mountain where apparently a battle had been fought. The two bucks said that they had sent a buck back to notify the village and soldiers.

Tossing a black pony tail, Indian wig to the crowd, he said they had found the wig near one of the dead bucks, whom he knew had never owned such a thing, for he had hair of his own. While passing the strange piece of deception around, Mincy recognized it as Ned's. She said that Ned used to wear it around camp over on Green River to make him look like her mother's people.

The cry went out that Ned was guilty. It was he who had killed the three bucks, and stolen their ponies. It was self-evident that Clouse Caseburg had killed Tickup's buck, so they said.

The soldiers came. Every tributary of Wind river was in an uproar.

"Whiskey was the cause of it all," shouted the squaws as they searched for the bottles.

The soldiers ordered Casamero and Johnny Simo off the reservation. They hit the trail south for Fort Bridger.

The soldiers arrested Caseburg for killing Tickup's buck.



But Tickup's confession won his freedom. He was ordered back to Fort Hall, Idaho, where he came from.

The squaws fell upon Tickup and beat her up. She was lectured and told that all the fancy beaded, drunken, she dog squaws like her, and the foxy dog bucks, like Caseburg and her dead buck, should be killed anyway. Another wrathful mother allowed that all such should be treated by the medicine-man, just like the buck ponies, so they wouldn't bother the whole herd. Something had to be done, said another, or no papoose would know its own brother or sister. There would be nothing left of the great Shoshone tribe worth living for.

Caseburg and Tickup narrowly escaped death and were driven off the reservation.

Ned, Galt, Joe Pease and Taresa had escaped with all of the Indian's ponies. They were being pursued by a roving band of Sioux, who had also lost their extra ponies to Galt's fleeing outfit, over on Lost Creek, in the Red Desert country. This was north of where he was finally surrounded by the Sioux, near Tub Springs, on the old abandoned stage route, where the two white men, Ned and Taresa were saved from sure death by Colonel Myer's Texas cowmen, who drove the Indians off as they were traveling west to Idaho with a drove of cattle.

## CHAPTER XII

### DOUBLE-CROSS DEATH TRAPS



**A**FTER Colonel Myers, a drover from Texas, got his cow-punchers organized, he drove a roving band of Sioux Indians out of his line of march, on the old stage coach and pony express trail. The Indians had surrounded Tip Galt, Joe Pease, Taresa, a Mexican, and Nigger Ned Huddleston, alias Old Quick Shot, Tan Mex and many other aliases, and escape was impossible.

Galt's outfit, that Myers had just given a new lease of life by driving off the Indians, had a fine bunch of horses. They had stolen these horses from the Shoshones' reservation, and passed through the Sioux Indian country with the ponies, as a ruse to make the Shoshones believe that the Sioux had done the stealing. The Sioux discovered the ruse, and not wanting to be blamed for the white man's stealing, gave chase, expecting to recapture a small bunch of their own Sioux ponies, which Galt's outfit had taken from them; also to get some scalps and the stolen Shoshone ponies as well.

Not being able to follow the trail after dark, the Sioux made a forced march after night across the Red Desert. They got in front of the unsuspecting outfit, and finally recaptured most of the stolen ponies. These ponies they cached with their own extra ponies near-by, while they besieged the Galt outfit.

Galt's outfit profited by this siege inasmuch that Myers turned over to them all the recaptured ponies, including the extra Sioux ponies found with the ones that Galt had stolen from the Shoshones, thus giving Galt quite a respectable drove in appearance.

Myers was no cockerel; he was an old-time rancher on the Mexican border. He knew there were thieves and thieves, and that Galt's kind were in a class by themselves. He knew they

were thieves for the lack of something more exciting and daring to do rather than for the mere love of gain. They were the opposite of the thin-lipped, greedy, grafting, money worshippers in more civilized localities.

Galt's kind were regular princes of benevolence with their ill-gotten gains. No man walked when they rode; the hungry feasted at their expense. They foolishly bucked the tiger in his own den and spent money like water. There was seldom a drunkard among the Galt kind, though they often played drunk to the "queen's taste" as a ruse.

The experience of these daring rovers had long since taught them that whiskey was a brain wrecker and meant the downfall of all who stayed with it, though they used it to advantage in many ways. New officials, after territories were formed, drank at their expense; and often became classmates in crime through its effects. Tip Galt had no fear of the farcical law enforcement; as for society, there was none to fear.

Colonel Myers knew this and treated the bunch like lords. The Colonel took a last good look at the bunch and wished that Billy could have seen them, but he and Bob Tobey were shadowing the Sioux to see that they were bluffed out of the country, so they would not be likely to bother his outfit again.

Myers' herd of cows was no more than out of sight when Galt hit the old trail east back over the great divide. He was aiming for a favorite rendezvous back of Elk Mountain. Here two camps were necessary, one for cooking and lounging in the daytime, another for sleeping in, which overlooked the lower camp and open park below, thus avoiding a night's surprise.

The old corral, which has been used by them sometime before, was repaired. The order of the day was roping and breaking wild ponies, trimming manes and tails, doctoring sore backs, and working over all previous brands. This progress meant changing the previous brand and general appearance of the pony until its own mother wouldn't recognize it.

While performing these duties, Galt stood watching Ned's experienced hand, as he was running the hair brands on a pony. Ned's quick, skillful strokes with the little, white hot curved

iron rod across the hair, singed and scorched the surface just enough to show the brand. Galt rubbed the scorched hair off and let the pony up.

"I'd like to see the man that could tell whether that brand was put on this morning or a year ago," said Galt. "Where'd you learn all that artist stuff, Ned?"

"Mistah Galt, if you ever rode fo' dem big cow ge'men down on de Mexican bo'dah you'd lu'n dis heah business or lose yo' job moughty quick, sah. Yes sah, it's a pow'ful good hand down dah what steals mos' cattle fo' de boss. But look out, Mistah Cowpuncher, if ebah da cotch you stealin' fo' youse'f, da's no ammunition wasted on a small cow thief like dat. No sah, da' jest use a grape vine an' a mesquite limb, den shoot you full o' holes while you hang, dat's all."

"Then I don't blame you experts for leaving Texas and coming out here where you have a chance to steal something for yourself," said Galt.

"Oh, all dem big cowmen down on de bawder is stealin'," said Ned.

"Ah! What you giving us," said Galt. "All cowmen are not thieves."

"I don't say dat, Mistah Galt. I jest say de man what hold de job, bran's de most of Mistah Maverick's cattle fo' der man what he wo'ks fo'."

"Mister Maverick! Who was Mr. Maverick that everybody was stealing from down in Texas, anyway?" asked Galt.

"Don't you nevah heah nothin' 'bout Mistah Sam Maverick down in Texas?"

"Well, Mistah Sam Maverick was one of dem big politicians, what couldn't steal nothin' if he wanted to. So he jest gets himself a moughty big herd of cattle what hain't go no bran's at all on 'm. Den dat honest politician jest lets his best man stampede dem no bran' cattle all over Texas.

"Now den, de big roundups is comin' off, and dat Mistah Sam bin right dah with mo' riders dan anybody. He asks de blessin' fo' ever' body when da is eatin'. He bless de co'n-pone, de black 'lasses, an' de po'k an' beans; den asks de good Lawd to be

easy on dem good cowboys what's goin' help 'im git some of his lost cattle back. All dem cowmen bin feelin' moughty sorry for Mistah Sam, 'bout losin' all dem fine cattle. Yes, da was, Mistah Galt."

"It served him darned well right," said Galt. He was just like all them fool politicians. They don't study anything except how to get elected again. They couldn't learn anything about cows, for they're too busy studying graft and whitewash. I learned all about them chaps in California. That fellow wouldn't know how to handle a milk goat, let alone handling a big herd of cattle."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout cows, ha! Say, Mistah Galt, when all dem big round-ups was ovah, dat Sam Maverick was de biggest cattle man in Texas. He got all dem other fellers' unbranded cattle and his own too. He jests brands seventeen times as many cattle as he lost. How's dat fo' don't know nothin? Ha, ha, ha. Oh, no, dem politicians don't know nothin' 'bout cows. Da jest know enuff to set all de cowmen in Texas to lea'nin' how to steal cattle 'thout gittin' cotched at, dat's all."

"Then, that's where the word "maverick" came from, is it?" asked Galt.

"Mistah Sam Maverick is suah bin de daddy of dat maverick stealin'. An' now all unbranded cattle all ovah the country is called mavericks, 'cause da hain't got no bran' on 'em."

Galt finished his lunch and scurried away, leading his pack pony. The pick and shovel handle sticking out of the pack, and the gold pan lashed on the side, indicated an innocent prospector, and thus no questions were asked as to his business. He arrived in Fort Steel, got his supplies, and loitered about the railroad station reading an old paper.

The clicking of the wires was music to Galt, as he was an expert at the keyboard, which had served him well more than once while in California. He lost interest in his paper when he heard Fort Bridger call Fort Steel.

The message announced the killing of one Casamero, a Mexican, near there the night before. Casamero was shot while in

the company of Johnny Simo. They had been trying to steal horses from W. F. Amberson, a California drover, who was on his way to the eastern market with a large herd of horses.

Tip Galt was now anxious to get back to camp. Casamero was a friend of his, and a brother to Taresa, who would no doubt be anxious to get back at Amberson for killing his brother. As Amberson was west of them, and must pass within the next few days between his own camp and Fort Steel, that would be his chance.

Galt had known Amberson in California as a high-roller, son of a rich horse rancher. Taresa would not be alone when he met this dashing, daring young horseman, whom Galt said had as much sand and gall as a Mexican game cock, and like a game cock would perhaps die with his spurs on, unless Taresa could be persuaded to get even in some other way.

This cunning leader, Galt, had been whitewashed, log rolled and alibied out of crime, so he knew the value of a safety valve. He also knew that murder was the hardest crime to dodge in the game of criminal chance.

Eventually he made Taresa see that there were other ways to get back at Amberson, other than bushwhacking him as he came through the great pass over the mountain. Galt explained his plan of taking toll out of Amberson's herd and giving him the scare of his life.

"Scare!" exclaimed the revengeful Mexican, as he sprang to his feet. "I'm entitled to that fellow's scalp, Tip!" He gathered up some jerky meat, pepper, and salt, and started for his horse.

"Hold on there, Taresa, where you going?" called Galt.

"I'm going back on the trail to the pass. I've heard enough of this talk down along the Rio Grande; that it's no more harm to kill a Mexican or a nigger than it is to kill a coyote. That may go in Texas, but it won't go out here in these hills."

"Now look here, Taresa, I don't blame you for getting mad. I do blame you for using your gun before you use your head. Now, you know as well as I do, that nothing short of a bullet or a rope awaits every d—— one of us, in the end, if we keep

up this stealing business. If you're going to be a sport, be one, don't be a squealing bushwhacker."

Taresa flared up as if he might do something, but a warning from Pease in the rear stopped him.

"Say," said Galt, "what did we do to them three peaceable Shoshones, when they actually caught us stealing their ponies? We shot them down like dogs, without answering their questions, didn't we?"

"Yes. And Taresa, you fired the first shot," said Pease.

"Now, that's just what I want to make Taresa understand. If we had a right to kill men in defense of ponies we had stolen, Amberson certainly had a better right to kill one of us for stealing horses he had bought and paid for."

This rag chewing wrangle was brought to a sudden close by a shout from Ned.

"Look out!" exclaimed Ned. "Da's somebody aftah dem hosses up dah. See 'm! See 'm! Run, sah."

Every one grabbed guns and swung into their saddles. Peering out of the quaking asp grove through the field glasses revealed a mountain lion struggling with a yearling colt. The mother was frantically wheeling, kicking and striking at the beast to save her young. While the men were galloping toward the scene the lion sprang upon the mare, sank his teeth into the back of her neck, lacerating her breast, shoulders and arms with its long, cat like claws until she had to be shot.

The men were almost upon the scene when the beast jumped off the mare and skulked into a small cluster of sprawling cedars and craggy rocks. The men dashed around the small, rugged spot, to prevent escape. They searched but no lion could be found.

Ned refused to give up the search, saying, "No! Dat Billy Buck what knows mo' 'bout dese big puma cats, what da' call mountain lions up heah, told me dese lions nevah run away, do jest sneaks an' lays 'roun' 'til you most steps on 'im fo' he moves."

The search was continued on foot, Ned in the lead, followed by Taresa. He was just passing under the big beast, where he

lay stretched full length on a large, low cedar limb, but a few feet over Ned's head, when the sudden crack of Taresa's pistol sounded, followed by the dying lion flouncing down at Ned's heels. This sent him to the opening with a rush.

Taresa sank down with laughter, as Galt appeared with pistol in hand. "What's the matter, Taresa?"

"Oh nothing. That fool nigger lost his head again like he did down in Texas on the Pacos river, when he jumped through Good Night's bunk house window and never did stop running until he struck Wyoming."

After viewing the big, yellowish or reddish brown, cat whiskered beast and taking the pelt, saving the long claws to trade the Indians for trophies, Taresa disappeared.

"He has gone back on the trail to watch for Amberson's coming?" said Galt, in answer to Pease's question.

In the meantime, Amberson was having things all his own way, one hundred and fifty miles back in the Bitter Creek country. Galt knew nothing about this, except what he had caught going over the wires about the death of Casamero. After the killing of Casamero, Amberson escorted his old double-crosser down near the railroad bridge and returned to his camp.

The town of Green River was just on the opposite side of the river where the old double crossing decoy of Amberson's found sympathizers, who fell for his hard luck story. He claimed that he had had some words with Amberson, the boss of the big herd of horses, about the mountain meadow massacre.

"He called me a d—— lying son-of-gun of a Mormon, and kicked me out of his camp. He refused to pay me my wages. When I went back to get the horses I had worked for, he began shooting at me, and I had to run to save my life," said the double-crosser.

"Why didn't you kill him?" asked Pedro, a Mexican.

"How could I when my belt and everything was in the wagon?"

"I'll give you a gun and go and help you," said Pokey Mayett.

That settled it. The old double-crosser got a good horse and saddle, to say nothing about the Winchester rifle, six-shooter



and cash, which Pedro and Mayett put up for eats and drinks.

The three then lit out for Amberson's camp, which was on Cedar creek, fourteen miles south of Rock Springs, Wyoming. Here it was agreed that Amberson was to lose a bunch of saddle horses while he slept. These horses were supposed to be in lieu of the ones he had cheated his man out of.

It was dark when they came near Amberson's camp. The old double-crosser had the two men wait, while he went to spy out the location of the saddle herd, which, he said, would either be in a bunch by themselves, or below the main herd.

Instead of doing as Pedro and Mayett expected him to, he interviewed Amberson. The trap was set the same as it had been a few nights before at Fort Bridger, where it cost Casamero his life and sent Johnny Simo to the hills afoot.

On his return to where the two men waited for him, he reported that the saddle horses were above and on the opposite side of the creek from the camp.

Amberson's decoy, according to instructions, was well in the lead. They were just passing the camp when a stream of light and a roar of gun fire seemed to flash from every sage bush along the creek bank. Mayett, in the rear, wheeled and fled back down the creek, followed by Pedro. Amberson, well mounted, sprang into the rear, firing rapidly at Pedro as they ran. Pedro threw himself over on the side of the horse, to dodge the bullets he felt plowing into the saddle cantle; thus he left his horse. Believing Pedro done for, Amberson spurred on over him, firing at Mayett, who rode a famous running horse, widely known later on as the old Plug, which carried his rider to safety in spite of Amberson's continued shooting.

Early in the evening, before this shooting affair, Amberson rode up to the camp of Billy Buck and Jim King. He stated he was camped just below, with a herd of horses, and would like all the information he could get about feed and water ahead on the trail.

As Amberson was about to leave Billy pointed to a big buckskin mare, with the harness on, and asked Amberson if he had anything that would mate her in a team.

"Yes, I have several good mates for that mare," said Amberson.

"I'll be down in the mornin' and buy one from you," said Billy.

"Come early; we grub before daylight," cautioned Amberson.

Billy rode up to the camp at dawn. The men were roping saddle horses for the day's work. No one paid any attention to his appearance in camp. Every one seemed in a hurry.

Amberson ran up the bank from where he was fussing with the horses, laid his hand on the horn of Billy's saddle, and said, "I can't spare the time to let you have that mare this morning. We had trouble here last night. Pedro, a Mexican, and a fellow they call Mayett, tried to steal a bunch of my saddle horses. We had a running fight and whether we killed or wounded either of them we don't know. But it's pretty sure the Mexican was hit as he left his belt and spurs half-way up that hill right over by that big rock there. You better look him up; he might be past going."

"I'll track 'im up an' ten' to 'im right now," said Billy.

"Do you know those two fellows?"

Billy grinned. "I reckon I know 'bout ever'body what rides these hills round here," was the answer.

"They are regular horse thieves, are they not?"

Billy laughed aloud. "I'm not talkin' 'bout other people when they hain't here, Mister. If I was I wouldn't be here to talk. Don't yer know that?"

"Oh! I have been told all along that I would find nothing but thieves in the Bitter Creek country."

"That hain't so, Mister. Thars a lot of wild people round these hills what hain't no good ter themselves nor nobody else, but thars jest a whole passel of jest as good people here as anywhere else. I reckon I orter know 'cause I'm next ter all of 'em. Thar's S. I. Fields, Old Dad Young, Pete Hines, and a lot more of 'em right thar in Green River what's good as anybody. And I don' reckon anybody will tell you I'm a thief."

"No," said Amberson. "Captain Harding wrote me about you

and the trail. You are all right, young man, and I'm glad I met you. I must go."

Amberson galloped away to catch up with his outfit, as they were on the trail.

Billy tracked Pedro. He found him, and Mayett, all whole, in Green River. He gave Pedro his pistol and scabbard, and got the whole story from him. The rest of the town was none the wiser.

The old black whiskered double-crosser was making it pay as he got horses, saddles and guns from his duped friends.

Amberson's next stunt was pulled off when he camped at what was then known as Jack Marrow's meadows, but was known later on as Taylor's Sheep Ranch, near the old Laclede stage station. Here Amberson pulled off the same stunt on Jack Leath, who had a little trading post, and sold corn juice and supplies to such travelers and friends who might not wish to go to the town for them.

Johnny Pare and Petrified Johnson's eastern bug hunters happened to be camped at this old stone home, stage station at the time.

Amberson's decoy came down late in the evening and unrolled the same sympathetic story he handed out to Pedro and Mayett at Green River. Leath fell for the old story, and the pair were off for a bunch of fat ponies.

On striking the creek just below where the camp was supposed to be, there were several short, steep, dry washes that headed up to the bench land that sloped off in the direction of the old stage station, where Leath had his store.

Amberson and his men had located on one of these washes, heading against a ledge of rocks, to trap Leath in, but Leath knew these washes far better than they did.

On reaching the designated spot, where Leath was to be trapped, the decoy said to his duped assistant, "Now you stay right here by these big rocks and don't move until I get back. I will slip up and see if there is any one guarding the saddle horses."

After the decoy had left him, Leath began to feel uneasy.

He glanced around him. He decided to ride up towards the camp. He rode up to the next wash, where the outlet above was good. He located in the ditch, out of sight, and awaited results.

Three men rode slowly down the creek towards him. As they came closer, Leath recognized the horse and rider that had just left him. Leath twigged the old man's scheme to trap him, and opened up such a rapid fire on the bunch that they got what they never came down there for. Before the panic stricken drovers could get their wits collected, if they had any to collect, Leath was fleeing down the slope towards the old station.

He came to the windowless opening in the rear of the old station. He called Johnny Pare, got a stock of cartridges and grub and matches.

"Take everything of mine you can cover, for your outfit, Johnny. That old, two-faced, black-whiskered devil tried to double-cross me, and I gave them a touch of high life. Tell them I was here and left right away for Green River. Good-by. Say nothing."

Johnny wasn't the smartest man on the slope, but he was smart enough to know that Leath never went towards Green River.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE GALT GANG MEETS REWARD



THE morning following Leath's falling for Amberson's double-cross decoy, the eastern fossil hunters ate an early breakfast and prepared for a day's cruise up on the dry flats in the direction of Powder Springs Butte. Johnny Pare and Petrified Johnson, who were the western guides, packers and assistants to these tenderfoot "bug catchers," warned them that trouble was brewing for Leath, the man who owned the little stock of goods in the old stone building where they were camping temporarily.

Suddenly the atmosphere outside of this old, bullet proof structure turned blue from the blasphemous, threatening commands hurled at the peaceful inmates. They were ordered to come out, unarmed, with hands up, or they would be dragged out.

"Come out and take some of your own medicine, you d—— Bitter Creek cutthroats," roared one of the Amberson double-crossers, who were shooting up the camps as they passed through the country.

"Come a'running," shouted another one of the dozen, mounted, armed men that had dashed around the building.

This continued, cursing demand to come out was only answered by ready guns at every sashless window in the rock walls of the old station.

"Halt!" commanded Johnson to Amberson, the leader of the horse drovers, who attempted to advance. "To come farther means death," shouted the guide.

"Hold on! For God's sake, don't kill any one until we know what all this means!" exclaimed an elderly fossil hunter.

The old easterner had his wits and sand with him. He soon had an understanding that he would not be harmed if he came

out unarmed. The old tenderfoot walked boldly out and demanded to know what was wanted.

"We want and must have that man, Jack Leath, dead or alive, and we don't care a d—— which way we get him, just so we get him," said Amberson.

"Mr. Leath hasn't been in this house, my friend, since he left here in company with that man there, with his arm in the sling."

"Hold on there, fellers, play fair. Don't come any closer. We have harmed nobody and demand a show for our lives," said the cook, from within, to a man attempting to advance.

"Keep still, boys, until we have an understanding with this gentleman."

"Are you sure that this man here, with the lame arm, left here with Jack Leath last night?" asked Amberson.

Advancing for a closer view of the wounded man, the old easterner began, "Well, I must say I believe this is the same man. Of course, he has made some change in his clothing; he wore a cap last evening, if I am right in my identification."

"Of course you're righter 'n a rat, Mister. I know that's the same old chap," said Johnny Pare.

Amberson was asked to send his winged bird in to look the house over for Leath. Finding their man was not there, they demanded Leath's goods. They claimed that Leath had tried to steal their saddle horses, and when they caught him in the act he shot two of their men, and killed a good horse. They wanted the goods to pay for the horse.

Rather than take further chances, the easterner gave Amberson a part of Leath's outfit, and escaped further trouble.

But the westerners knew that it was better than a fifty-fifty bet that they would have to reckon further with Jack Leath before they crossed the great divide.

Neither Leath, or the bug hunters, knew at that time of the killing of Casamero, the Mexican, near Fort Bridger, back on the trail, or of the shooting up of Pedro and Mayett, by this same gang of California toughs. Although Galt, Taresa, a

brother of Casamero, had heard of Casamero's death over the wire at Fort Steel, far in lead Amberson's herd.

This double-crossing seemed to be a clear case of California toughs getting all the fun they could out of trying to beat the Wyoming sagebrush kings at their own game of criminal sport. This bunch of rowdies seemed to have a mania for sending a man ahead of their herd, with a pitiful story of having been robbed out of his wages, and soliciting help to get even with the boss; then shooting them up, and getting their mounts and trappings as plunder.

When Jack Leath told Johnny Pare that he was going to Green River, it was to throw Amberson off his track. He intended to lead Amberson's herd to the rougher country, far to the east, so the killing he had in view would not be laid to him, or any of his friends.

Two days later, Leath reached the rough, broken hills on the head of the Muddy, near the great Whitman Pass, and began to look for a favorable location to do some bushwhacking. Wishing for more than one place in case of failure on his first attempt, he pushed on ahead, and was working up along the great gap in the continental divide above the floor of the great crack in the mountain, known as Bridger's Pass, when he was startled to a dead standstill by a voice in the rocks not twenty feet above.

"Hello, Jack Leath. What are you doing here?"

Leath seemed speechlessly glued to the spot. He gazed tensely at the cluster of gray rocks, mingled with brush of the same color, where the voice seemed to come from.

"See anything, Jack?" asked the voice.

"Nothing but rocks and brush. Is that you, Taresa?"

Taresa rose up with a smile.

"By thunder!" exclaimed Leath. "I never was so dumb-founded in my life. I didn't suppose there was another man within fifty miles of this place."

The two men talked together. They agreed on Galt's plan to scatter Amberson's herd, after he had crossed the North Platte, and collect the toll in horses, instead of killing men.

Galt had explained that Amberson's father was a rich old rancher, and might come out from California to investigate, and place the blame where it belonged, which would spoil their business.

Amberson was watched and when he camped on Pass Creek, east of the North Platte river, they were ready for him. Galt now had five men instead of four. He divided them the day Amberson's herd came in sight of Taresa, who was the lookout on the mountain back on the trail at the pass.

Amberson's next camp was foretold by his noon location. The object was to stampede the herd from the east, and send them back west into the more broken country, where the thieves would have a better chance of cutting off a bunch before Amberson could recover them.

Galt and Ned were located on the west side of the camp. Taresa, Pease and Leath were to the east with the glasses. They were on a hilltop, where they could watch the maneuvers around the camp, and the herd, ready to move down after dark and stampede the horses.

A fractious bronco, that had just been caught and picketed, got the rope around his hind pastern. He pulled up the picket pin, scattered the saddle horses that stood around camp, and lit out down the road east like the tail end of a cyclone, trying to outrun the rope that trailed behind him. The bronco crossed over the hill, turned up towards the mountain and become entangled in the brush. The man who followed after the bronco lost track of him when he left the road, and returned to camp, as it was getting too dark to see the rope trail.

Taresa's bunch saw the whole performance. They hustled down and caught the frightened bronco. He seemed to think that the rope was to blame for everything.

"Hold on there, boys! This white-eyed snorter is crazy as a bedbug. See him tremble. If he ever gets loose he never will quit running," said Taresa.

"Well, what if he does? Won't he stir things up in the herd?"

Leach thought that the thing to do was to shorten his rope



and tie a big bunch of sagebrush to the end, so it would bounce after him as he ran.

"Say, fellers," said Pease, "we'll just add a big sage bush to his tail; it'll make 'im feel kinda proud."

"No, no! Don't do that until we get him out on the road near the herd, he'll go crazy. Wait until he knows where the herd is, then we can let him loose.

Everything was all ready, and it was late enough for the horse camp to be slumbering. The three rode cautiously down the road, as near the horse camp as was safe. Taresa kept the bronco's head snubbed up close to the horn of his saddle. Leath got his horse's shoulder up against the bronco's heels, to keep him from kicking Pease while he tied the sagebrush to the bronco's tail. Pease stooped down under the neck of Leath's horse and tied the bush on, but before Pease could straighten up the bronco cut loose, with both hind feet, leaving Pease unconscious and speechless at his heels. While the bronco ran, kicking and bucking, down the road, headed directly for the herd, Taresa and Leath grabbed Pease up, threw him across the saddle and hurried off the road.

The thundering roar of the stampeding herd and the anxiety to get Pease back in the hills to safety made the moment too tense for any other thought. Stampeding horses, and riders trying to turn them back, were liable to be upon them any minute. There was no time or place to give aid to Pease, until secure cover back in the hills could be reached.

When once on safe ground, among the rocks and timber, an examination revealed the fact that Pease was alive, but still unconscious, with his jaw and one shoulder crushed. The slow and disagreeable march was continued, until within half a mile of their camp. Here they stopped, under a shelving rock well screened from view, where a small fire could be hidden from view from the little valleys below, or from any one who might be passing.

Leaving Leath with the still unconscious Pease, Taresa hurried away, and, by circuitous routes, returned with the necessary camp equipage from their main camp.

With boughs, leaves, robes and blankets, Pease was made as comfortable a bed as possible. There was little to do and less to do with. Leath stayed with him, while Taresa left to try to get in communication with Galt and Ned, and see what they thought about trying to take Pease out to Laramie City, where he could be cared for.

The following morning Amberson's riders could be seen from the mountain tops galloping here and there, with small bands of horses. The job of scattering the herd seemed to be a good one. Amberson's dread of the Indians kept them from reaching out very far from the camp, which gave the thieves a good show to get stragglers.

After looking things over with the glasses, from the high peaks, Taresa visited the place where they had decided to meet, but found no sign of Galt or Ned.

The trump part of this game of Galt's was to watch for scattering bunches on the outside, with glasses, and when the field was clear, push them out farther, taking whatever Amberson failed to find. Galt and Ned had done this, pushing a bunch of the stampeding horses well up the Platte river.

Taresa stuck to the high points and watched the movements of Amberson's men until he pushed out on the trail with his herd. The count of the men with the herd, indicated that all of Amberson's men were with the herd. (The Omaha Bee, Omaha, Nebraska, published W. F. Amberson's half told encounter with thieves on the trail that fall.)

Galt's plan was to get his five men out on the hills, wearing blankets and horse tail wigs, hazing about just out of reach, on the higher ridges here and there, making Amberson's men think they were Sioux Indians trying to cut off any one they caught on the outskirts; also to intimidate any one from stopping back to look for straggling horses. Pease's accident put this plan out of action.

After Taresa had about given up hope of Ned and Galt being all right, he found them in camp, with quite a bunch of Amberson's horses in their own herd. There were seven head of

strange, fat saddle horses in the corral, with the previous brands worked over by Ned's skillful hand.

The bunch visited Leath's camp. They found that Pease had revived for spells, but collapsed each time. His jaws were locked and neither food nor water could be gotten down him. Ned was left with him, while Taresa and Galt went to the hills to look over the lower lands, with glasses, to see if any men or horses were in sight. In the meantime, the owner of the seven saddle horses had visited the corral unobserved and saw his horses, located the lower camp and slid for cover.

When Leath reached the main camp and saw the seven saddle horses he told Galt they were not Amberson's horses.

"Oh, yes, they are," said Galt, "they have to be."

"If them hain't Texas horses, I never saw one," said Leath. "What did the nigger say about it?"

"Well, Ned said like you, he thought they were Texas tick bitten ponies. He says they're just like Texas cattle, made rabbit breasted, with both front legs coming out of the same hole, with a sunfish hind ends on them."

The discussion caused some uneasiness, for it was as Galt stated: the country was not the wild wilderness it had been when they had used the place before.

"The papers have been telling us," said Leath, "that the Laramie plains have been flooded with Texas cattle. Even North Park up the Platte river here has cattle in it, they say."

Leath was right: the regeneration of the country was not coming, it was here, and to stay. The fact that the buffalo, elk, deer, antelope and mountain lion, and sheep fattened the year around in these sheltered valleys and broken foot hills was all the evidence the thinking stockman needed. He knew his cattle and horses would do the same. Daily these men dropped down on these favored places like grasshoppers on a green meadow. Texas was overstocked and needed an outlet and it was here for the taking.

Galt's kind were too busy with their outlawry on the outer reaches of an incoming better class of people to see that the beginning of their ending was upon them.

The inflow of the new ranch element were not all angels by any means. But there were many real men among them, so, as a whole, they were preparing the country for a still higher plane of real home folk, who were to follow, as soon as permanent locations were established, and cabins built.

These first ranchers, by the very nature of the situation, had to be a law unto themselves. Most of them were equal to the occasion, having come from a state where the eye and trigger finger usually decided the fate of this class of criminals, wherever they were overtaken.

Jack Leath knew all these things, so he didn't hesitate to say he believed the camp unsafe. He told Galt that he had foreseen the time was close at hand when all would be held responsible for reckless killing, or he would have killed Amber-son's double-crosser before he had his second sleep after leaving Laclede station.

Leath got the bunch all scared out. They decided to cross back over the mountain, and make for the Brown's Hole country, and get Tom Crowley to start a horse ranch in cahoots with them. This way they could play "honest John," and still belong to the "Steal family." At least no one would ever know how slippery they were until they had slipped out of their present standing to that of Big Business, where they would be partly immune, at least, from the accusation of ever having committed a crime.

Ned came down after a pick and shovel. Pease was dead.

"We will be up in the morning," said Galt. "Don't try to bury him before we come. He has a roll somewhere about his clothes."

"I done hunt fo' dat roll, Mistah Galt, nevah foun' one rade cent on 'im sah."

Ned gathered up his tools and extra chuck, and left camp without comment. He seemed either downcast or mad about something.

Leath, who seemed ever ready to speak disrespectfully about the negro, spoke up, saying, "I'll bet that nigger stole that dead

man's money and is afraid a haunt or mountain lion will get him up there in the dark."

"Don't you ever worry about Ned getting scared after he once sets out for business," said Taresa. "I know Ned; and if you want to know more about him, just spring that suspicion of his robbing the dead on him in the morning when we go up, and see how quick you have started something."

Everybody slipped off to the upper sleeping camp in the rocks, expecting to attend Pease's funeral the next morning. But alas! Today never reveals what tomorrow may bring.

The new rancher, who owned the seven saddle ponies, had appeared on the scene while Galt, Ned and Taresa were with Leath at Pease's bedside and saw his saddle horses, with the brands all worked over. He decided at once that this change of his brand was done by an expert, who also needed fixing, and that now was the time and here was the place to start civilization.

The new civilizer had seen three men. He wanted them all in camp when he passed sentence upon them. This double camp business of Galts had balked his heretofore attempt. But the morning the three were to visit Ned's camp to bury Pease the crisis came.

The new civilizer and his crew opened fire from ambush without warning. Taresa and Galt fell near the corral, riddled with bullets. Leath, who had mounted his horse, reached the woods a half mile distant, before both he and his horse fell fatally wounded.

Hearing the heavy firing down at the main camp, Ned dropped his pick and shovel and gave up his grave digging to see what all the shooting meant. While reconnoitering he found Leath and his horse, both silent in death, among the heavy foliage. True to Taresa's suspicion, Pease's money belt was found by Ned on Leath's body beside his own belt.

Strange as it may seem to some, not one of these dead bodies was searched or molested. They lay as they fell; not even their guns or pistols were taken. It seemed a clear case of just ridding the country of outlawry.

Ned viewed the gruesome scene from a higher point, with Leath's field glasses. The drifting smoke and lashing flames, which were licking up the dry corral poles, and every vestige of the camp equipage, were telling moments for the black outlaw.

It took the cloud of dust that rose in the gulch below, from his entire band of departing, stolen horses, to remind him that he was an outcast afoot and alone in a strange locality.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A DISMAL OUTLOOK



**W**HEN Ned, the colored outlaw, looked down upon the scene of disaster he was dumbfounded. Ned Huddleston realized more fully than ever before that the declaration of his leader, Tip Galt, that all horse thieves sooner or later died with their boots on was a fact. From Ned's lookout on the mountain face, his dead companions could easily be seen lying near the camp, where they had fallen in death from the fatal shots.

The rapid gun fire that had brought Ned in sight of the scene at his camp had come from an unknown rancher, who had just located in the valley above. This newcomer, with his herd of cattle, had come from the Texas border, and knew from experience that one of the first steps in civilization in a country like that was to rid the country of the lawless element.

A small band of this new rancher's saddle horses had strayed away on the outskirts of his new location. These horses had mingled with a bunch of trail horses that Ned and Tip Galt, his leader, had stolen during a stampede of the Amberson herd.

The newcomer took up the trail of his horses, which led up into the mountain. Here he found Galt's secluded camp. There was no one in sight; but seven of his own horses were in the outlaw's corral, and his brands were all worked over in a manner that denoted expert work. He skulked away and returned with a bunch of his cowpunchers. They watched the camp until it was decided that there were but three men in the gang; and when they caught them all in camp, shot them down from ambush.

The slayers took their own horses, as well as the outlaw's stolen band, leaving the dead bodies of Tip Galt, Taresa, the Mexican, and Jack Leath untouched where they fell.

This was but one of the many just such happenings in those wild mountains during the process of changing from the outdoor bandit rule to a more domestic life.

Nigger Ned was a natural black actor, with many aliases, and a mind as changeable as the autumn aspen leaves which surrounded the place of his last theft. It was with a longing dread that Ned, looked down upon his dead companions. He knew that each of them, like himself, carried considerable money. With Leath's powerful field glasses he had seen that their murderers had not searched their bodies. He wanted that money.

Ned was not a coward at all times, but when he did change to fear he thought of nothing but self-preservation and a black stampede was sure to follow. In this case, the desire for the money held the outlaw down to business. But who might be watching? And might not one of the cow-punchers return with the same desire as himself.

Ned spent the entire day watching. Not a thing moved, except a huge, grizzly bear, with two cubs, that shuffled across the opening to where a mountain lion had killed a colt some time before. The doleful howl of the gray buffalo wolf, and the chattering wail of the coyote, reminded Ned that the scent of carrion was in the air and that nightfall was hovering about him.

The fire from the burning corral had smouldered and all was dark about the destroyed camp. Ned skulkingly circled the scene of carnage; by crawling he reached his dead companions. Quickly he ripped the waistband of their buckskin pants and removed the oiled silk, covering the large greenback bills. After removing the pocket change, he hurriedly crawled away.

While crawling away, he instinctively had the feeling of some near danger, and, drawing his pistol, he cautiously raised his head above the surrounding sagebrush. A huge dark object, like that of a hatless man, with a buffalo overcoat on, stood before him. A spooky feeling crept up Ned's spine as he nervously held his gun on the unknown disturber. Ned's nerve held out until the old mother grizzly dropped down from her



sitting posture and lumbered away, followed by her two cubs.

Ned was not long in reaching the timber across the way. He found his camp, where he had been caring for Joe Pease, the fourth member of the gang, who had succumbed from a kick of a fractious bronco. He finished the half dug grave and deposited the remains of Pease, the last of his companions in crime.

Ned ate a cold snack as he pondered over his predicament. He had money in abundance, but there was nothing to buy. His situation was a desperate one. He was afoot and alone in a country of which he knew nothing. His only hope was to take the old overland trail west, traveling by night to avoid detection anywhere near the scene of carnage.

Ned had a dread of being seen anywhere near the scene of disaster, lest he be accused of killing his own partners for their money, as he had been once before, in the case of Chang Lee. He was as innocent of murdering Chang Lee as he was of killing this outfit, but who knew that except himself.

Daylight found Ned, burdened with a light buffalo robe and a Navajo blanket and a small supply of grub, twenty miles west of the North Platte river. Tired and hungry from his long walk, he welcomed a long sleep and rest. Later on he entered a quaking asp grove of timber, as the shadow of darkness was approaching.

The lowing of a cow, and the camp fire he had seen ahead, warned him that there was a cow herd in camp on the trail just ahead, which he must pass.

On crowding through the underbrush and falling over dry poles, in order to get around the drover's camp, Ned struck a small brook in a dense jungle. Here he made a small fire, screened from view with his robe and blanket. He rolled down the mouth of an old salt poke until he came to the bit of flour it contained. He pushed the flour out around the side of the poke, forming a little basin in the flour in which he sprinkled a pinch of salt and yeast powder; he stirred the dribbling water in the basin of flour cautiously, forming a small wad of dough. This he drew out in a string-like roll, wound it around his green

stick, auger fashion. He held his stick of dough over the fire of coals, turning his stick until his bread was baked. His oyster can of coffee was ready. A little sugar and hot coffee in the lid of a can, made his syrup. Syrup and hot bread was a change from dried jerky meat and cold water.

Ned rolled up in his robe and blanket and slept the sleep of a natural born thief. Ned was not wholly bad; he was a free giver, with a kind heart for one of his kind, and true to his benefactors. But alas! His mania for calling other people's property his own was beyond his control.

After making several night drives, which brought him to the west slope of the Rocky mountain, he again had to pass another cow camp, on the old stage line trail.

Ned had become tired of walking and longed for a horse and saddle. With these, he could take to the hills, traveling parallel with the great highway. He could keep his bearings and make more time.

Ned saw a cow trailer's wagon pulled in for the night on a grassy plot, adjoining an aspen grove, at the foot of the mountain some fifty steps off the road. The herd of cows were grazing in that direction some distance back on the opposite of the road from the wagon. He knew the custom of keeping a horse or two saddled and tied to the wagon, or some near-by tree or shrub, for emergency use in case of a stampede or bad weather.

Things looked favorable for a mount. Ned couldn't stand the temptation. He skulked through the grove and waited until the midnight guards, who held the herd rounded up in a circle for the night, had been relieved. He gave the two new night herders time to go to sleep.

Now was the time for action. Ned approached through the open timber. A saddle horse was tied to one of the outside saplings. The horse's nostrils rattled as he either scented, or saw, the buffalo robe Ned was attempting to tie behind the saddle.

The owner of the herd was awake. He knew that the man fussing with the horse was none of his men, so he held his gun in hand, ready to challenge the meddler. He suspected

the intruder to be an Indian, as they were in the Indian country, from what he had heard from the horse trailers he had met back on the trail.

From behind a nearby horse, the cowman demanded, "Move and I will kill you!"

His words were only half uttered before Ned had swung into the saddle, and the horse was bucking off down towards the road for all he was worth. The cowman's pistol had begun roaring from the time he had challenged Ned. The pitching horse turned west around the grove in a keen run, but his bucking was of no use: Ned was a real "buster."

Ned had felt the sting of a bullet in his thigh. The horse slowed down, gave way and fell. He was dying from a shot and collapsed under the lash. Ned tried to get his robe and other belongings free from the dead horse, but the clattering hoofs coming nearer every moment sent him flying to the timber.

Billy Buck met and passed this herd of cows the following morning. He had a job helping John Razer, with his herd of horses over the mountain. The cowman told him the whole story. What Billy had learned from the Myers outfit about the two white men, Mexican and negro had enlarged his bump of inquisitiveness.

When Billy Buck had finished his contract with Razer and was on his return trip back home in the Green River country, he stopped at the dead horse and proceeded to trail the thief. Billy being an expert trailer, soon found blood and some huge, moccasined footprints, where the hollow of the foot had made a hole in the ground. This couldn't be an Indian, and was not likely to have been made by a white American; more likely it was some flat-footed European or a negro, which meant Ned, the Ozarker.

Billy had heard Bob Ship's story of how he, while with the Colonel Myers herd, had driven off a band of Sioux Indians that had two white men, a Mexican and a negro surrounded near the Dug spring on the old trail. He had also heard King's story, coming from Ike Frop, about Ned being hooked up with the Tip

Galt outfit, when they stole all the Shoshone Indian's ponies.

While Billy had no book learning he knew that two and two made four. This meant that Ned had been in that vicinity a short time before, and it was bullets to buckskins that he was trailing Nigger Ned, a freak of the black race.

Billy has suspicioned from the start that he had known the negro somewhere at sometime. He knew that he would know whether he was right or not if he could see his left groin, for if his suspicions were correct, the negro was branded there with a sweet potato brand. Billy had tried to draw Ned out at the salted diamond mine camp by relating the story of how a negro boy had got the brand, in Ned's presence, but Ned was silent on that subject. One thing that puzzled Billy was why any man with as many aliases as Ned should adopt his right name at any time, which he did when he struck Wyoming. If Billy was correct in his surmise, this negro's right name was really Ned Huddleston.

Billy Buck lost and found the wounded man's trail many times before the day was gone. After he had gotten a line on the trail, and saw that it was headed with the main highway, he galloped ahead to a favorable place for seeing tracks, picked it up and repeated the process until he had gone ten or fifteen miles. When he failed to find tracks he decided he had passed his man, or he had radically changed his course.

Night was coming on, so Billy found good grazing for his horse, and sought higher ground for a view with his glasses. He swept the country as the setting sun lighted up the west slope of the hills. He saw an old bull elk, with muzzle extended and his huge antlers laid back straddling his shoulders, enter an aspen grove. While watching for what he thought might be smoke, which had caught his eye near the center of the grove, he saw the old bull come tearing out of the grove, stop, wheel around and gaze back at the grove, then make off as if he knew there was danger in there.

Billy's experience told him the bull had seen something not of his kind. He kept watching for smoke, but saw nothing more of it. But after dark while moving his head about he

caught a glimpse of firelight. He lined the place up by laying his gun on a flat rock and sighting it at the fire. He then got a straight sarvis berry stick and laid it parallel with the gun barrel, and held it true to the position with a small rock. This was for future use, in case he failed to find it that night.

Billy hurried down, got his horse, and started out. He found Ned in the aspen grove, with a leg much too large to travel on, and with his left ear gone, only the lobe remaining.

Ned had shot an old fat black tailed buck deer that had come to the little spring, right near his camp, for a drink. The skin was his only bedding and the meat his only food. Billy rustled a cup of coffee, salt and pepper, and dry bread.

The experienced Billy started to work on the big, black, swollen thigh like an army nurse. He applied hot, wet bandages until pain was felt, then cold, wet ones until the pain indicated a change was needed. The wounds on both sides were kept open. Billy's salve and little liniment bottles were taken from his saddle pockets, where they had lain for months waiting for just such an emergency.

After he had done all he could, he asked, "Do you reckon I'd better go out ter the railroad and see Doc. Magee? He's at Rawlins; and that's tother side of the mountain not more 'n a day's ride from here."

Ned silently shook his head, and his big eyes glared from the blazing sticks as he stared at Billy's sympathetic face. Billy saw the big tears slipping down his black cheeks and turned away.

"Why is you allus good t'me, Billy, when you know I'm nuthin' but a stealin' niggah. Most all white folks hates niggahs nohow."

"I don't know, Ned, 'cept it's kaze I allus knowed you kain't make nobody better by bein' cruel to 'em."

"I believe that, Mistah Gr---ah Billy."

They both laughed.

"Jest as well of said it, Ned," said Billy.

"De Lawd sakes alive, Mistah Graff, I nevah knowed you in

dis wo'ld 'til dat night when you told dat sweet tater story. Den I knowed you fo' you bin haf done tellin' it."

"Why didn't you let me know jest who yer been, after that, Ned?" asked Billy.

"Well, Mistah Graff, you knowed jest as well as meself dat most all dese folks what comes to wild countries like dis hain't no punkin heads. An' most all o' 'em had killed some one or stole sumthin' or got in de wrong bed and got some woman's man shootin' at 'em, or some othah bad mess like dat, and left de place in de dark, an' jest come heah to hide from de law. None o' 'em is who da say da is nohow; an' if you go diggin' intah da' business you jest been shot dat's all. So I jest 'tend to mah own affai's and said nothin' 'kase I knowed you knowed who I been all de time. If yer hadn't, yer nevah would of tol' dat sweet tater bran' story right afo' mah face, Mistah Graff. Now dat is de Gawd's truff if I evah tol' it in all mah bo'n days."

"It's been a long time since I heard the word, Graff, Ned."

"I said it afo' I thought, Billy. Yer knows us boys allus called yer by de middle name."

Billy finally got Ned to sleep. He quietly wrapped the cape of his old, blue, cavalry overcoat around his own head and fell asleep almost immediately, as he usually did on such trips. Billy had no love for Ned, or any of his kind, in a way, though he appreciated the friendship and confidence of every outlaw. Not even his worst enemy could suffer in his presence, if he was in a helpless condition, but would receive his wholehearted aid. He asked no credit for that human spark; he was born with it; his ancestors were given the credit for his overdose of charity.

During the many days that Billy nursed Ned back to health, the past history of both was discussed, from the Bull Creek swimming hole in boyhood days to this singularly located camp. Ned knew that Billy had the confidence of all who had known him, in the hills as well as in the towns. Even the trailers had learned to trust him with their herds.

Every sagebrush rider in the country who had been bitten by

the tiger (faro), or other vices of human destruction, and gone broke, hit Billy for a ten or twenty and got it. Ned knew this; he also knew that Billy did all his quarreling and fighting in the outlaw's own camp and left it with closed lips.

Ned had learned that the way to discuss matters with his nurse was by plain, open facts, with no deception or dodging. He had given Billy a straightforward account of how he was left afoot, after the killing of Galt, Taresa, Jack Leath and the accidental death of Pease. He also told just how he had slipped down from his temporary camp in the dark and taken the money from the dead bodies of his own comrades, after the slayers had gone.

These new ranchers, as he supposed them to be, had shot down Ned's gang and left them lay as they had fallen, but had taken all of the outlaws' horses, leaving Ned afoot. Hence his trying to steal one of the cowman's horses to get out of the country on when he was shot.

While Ned's convincing account of how he happened to be there wounded was in the telling, Billy held up his finger and jerked his pistol to the front.

"Look out Ned!" he exclaimed, as he pointed to the steady gaze and the twitching ears of the high head of his horse, that stood in the brush by the camp.

## CHAPTER XV

### A BLACK THIEF IN TROUBLE



WHEN Billy Buck's horse indicated that he had heard or scented something not expected, on the outskirts of the little aspen grove, Billy sprang to his feet.

"Sumthin' wrong, Ned; mought be Indians," said Billy.

He threw the saddle on his horse, that stood motionless, with head high and erect, attentive ears, as he gazed steadily down towards the opening.

After Billy had taken observations he came back to Ned and reported that he had seen four men outside of the grove. He then returned to check up on their movements.

On reaching the outskirts of the grove, Billy saw three of the men on foot trying to track his horse from where he had been grazing. They were baffled, for Billy had muffled his horse's feet. His horse's tracks were as indistinct as those of a prowling bear, headed in the opposite direction from his camp. The cautious guide had entered the grove from the opposite side. The spring in the grove being the only water near he had to take his horse into camp for a drink.

Prowling bands of both Sioux and Ute Indians were liable to be in this locality, which made the precautionary act necessary.

The fourth man, who was still mounted, seemed to be taking no interest in tracking the horse, but moved about between the grove and the other three men. While he was moving about he came close enough for Billy to recognize his horse. Close attention soon satisfied him that the rider was his own partner, Jim King. Billy was puzzled; he had left King in camp many miles to the west from there, to await his return from helping John Razer take his herd of horses over the mountain.



While things were moving slowly, Billy ran back to encourage Ned by telling him that King was in the bunch. Ned was sitting up in his ill provided pallet, nursing his wound, with his pistol in his hand.

"Don't get scared, Ned. I can tell by his actions that King hain't in with the other three fellers. We'll stand by yer 'til yer can do your own fightin,'" said Billy, as he turned to run back to the puzzling scene.

Billy found, on reaching the edge of the woods, that the three men had mounted and were riding up his way. Loud talk was in the air. Trouble seemed to be brewing.

The ungainly, bulky pack needed fixing. They halted within a few paces of where Billy was concealed, and unloosened the lash rope, and threw off the buffalo robe covering, exposing extra riding saddles, and other plunder.

At this short range, Billy knew the other men, as well as King, without the use of the glasses. He could hear most of the conversation. The men were Tom Crowley, Johnny Simo and Charley Powe, who was Crowley's Mexican go-between in the Indian booze business. They all had once been cronies of Ned's, but now Crowley and the Mexican Powe were seeking him, and declaring a hanging bee would be the result if they found him.

In adjusting the pack Crowley flew in a pet and threw one of the saddles as far as he could sling it, saying, "That's the d— nigger's. Wonder why he didn't take his own saddle? We'll leave the d— things right here."

"No," said Powe, "We will need the money before we get out of this d— country."

"I'll not need any more money if I get my hands on that d— tenderfoot nigger," said Galt.

"Tenderfoot!" said Powe. "Call him a tenderfoot! He's beat the game by killing his own partners after they had gathered up a big herd of horses. He has robbed the dead; he ripped their clothes open to get the big greenback bills that I know they must of had, sold the herd and skipped. I wish that cow-man had of wounded him a little worse, then we would of got

the whole pile, and left his feet out in the sun to lose their tenderness. D— him! I'll kill him anyway, even if he spends all the money before I get the chance."

"Where did you get all that stuff?" asked King.

"D— it, didn't we just come from there? Johnny here knew where they were going to gather up a herd of horses big enough to get out on the trail with. We saw the whole wreck, burnt corral, dead bodies, ripped clothing and everything. That's where we got these d— saddles and things. Now, Johnny here, the d— red Sioux, wants us to believe the d— nigger never killed them," said Crowley.

"If you'd cut out that 'D— Sioux' business, Crowley, I'd like it better," said Johnny Simo.

"I'm not worrying about what you like best," answered Crowley.

"No," remarked Simo, "but you'd worry about that money that you think Ned got by robbing them fellows, when I am the only one that's entitled to a dollar of it. I helped steal them Shoshone horses and haven't got my share of it yet."

Turning to King, Johnny described the layout up there and said, "It is plain enough that a posse of them newcomers did the job. It's just like they are doing back in Utah and Idaho; they just shoot horse thieves and let them lay, take their horses and destroy their camps. They say there is no law and that is the only way to civilize a country. You know that, King, just as well as I do. We fellows have no kick coming, we kill too when it's the only way to get the goods."

Crowley turned threateningly to Simo.

King threw up his finger. "Now look here, boys! This is none of my affair, excepting to look after my partner. You fellers are chewing the rag too close to the quick. Stop it right now! There is nothing in quarreling among yourselves. Some of you fellows are getting killed every day or so."

"Jim is right, fellers, I quit right here," said Johnny.

"Right! You know I'm right. Every stream and meadow spot in this country is going to be filled up with these new stock ranchers. This wild and woolly stuff will have to move

back. Civilization will follow the railroad. Can't you see it? In the absence of law enforcement they are taking things in their own hands and saying nothing. Every darned one of you fellows will die with your boots on if you don't quite stealing or leave the country. I'm tellin' you facts, as Billy and I see them. It's for your own good, boys. We know you are all good fellows and we will never squeal on you in the world. But that isn't it. There is another kind of people taking possession of this country. Now, boys, I may not be any more honest than you are, but have taken another way of getting the other fellow's money, that's all. Now, go where you will and do as you please and you will find Billy and I just the same with all of our early day acquaintances. That's all I have to say about that.

"I saw you fellows from the hill and rode down thinking you might have seen something of Billy. That's how I came here," said King.

Crowley agreed with King, but hated to give up the negro's trail. He said he knew it was the negro because he found blood in the woods near where he was shot, before he reached his horses, on the opposite side of the grove.

King knew it was not the negro's tracks, but his and Billy's horse's tracks they had been following, for Ned was afoot. After King had heard the cowman's story, that he had shot and wounded a man, he, like Billy, never made but one guess; it had to be Ned. He had gone in the grove where the dead horse was and tracked Ned, by the blood on the leaves to the opposite side of that grove. There he had found where Billy had taken up the negro's moccasined footprints. He knew it was Billy's horse by his tracks. Billy's horse's hind feet were very long and pointed more than was usual at the toe, with very broad, stubby front feet.

King and Billy both had preceded Crowley's outfit on Ned's foot trail. This caused Crowley to pick up King and Billy's horse trails, thinking it was Ned's saddle and pack horses that he was following.

King had found where Billy had left his horse and gone up

on the hill to look the country over with his glasses. Here he found a sarvis berry stick purposely leveled up and held fast by a small stone on top of a large flat rock. King guessed at once that this stick was sighted at Billy's camp in the grove, as his horse could not be trailed away from that locality.

While King was using his glasses from the high point, where the stick was sighted on a patch of different colored foliage in the grove, he had seen the Crowley bunch far to the rear, trailing his and Billy's horse tracks. He ran down, mounted, and by a circuitous route came up to the Crowley outfit from the rear, and found out that they were mistaken in whose horses they were tracking. King kept that knowledge to himself, awaiting further development.

On reaching the grove near Ned's camp, where King was expecting Billy and Ned, Crowley's bunch gave up the trail. They started parleying as to what to do.

After much discussion among the outfit, Simo turned to King, and asked, "What will you give us for the saddles, Jim?"

"Gee whiz, fellows! I couldn't get them home without some one wanting to know where I had killed so many thieves. Besides I have no extra horses here to pack them to camp."

"Give us a hundred and take both horses, packs, saddles and all, except a little chuck," said Crowley.

King looked at the saddles. These saddles are worth several times that, boys, if I had them home, to say nothing about the rest of the outfit."

Crowley said they knew that, but they wanted to change climate, and play tenderfoot like the nigger, as that seemed to be a paying scheme. "If you want them, they're yours," he said.

King laughed. "It's just like finding the white man's God growing on a sage bush," said King. "Them saddles alone never cost less than seventy-five dollars apiece. They are made out of Santa Cruse leather. Here's your money, fellows, but I feel like I had stolen them."

Crowley stuck the money in his pocket.

They all shook hands with King. "Say hello to Billy. He

hain't just our kind, but he has a gizzard as big as a wild goose, and is all man just the same. Good-by, Jim."

The outlaws galloped away.

King began to fuss with his new purchases, when Billy softly called out from his hiding place, "Goin' to ride 'em all at once, Jim?"

King straightened up. He did not look at the grove, but kept on with his overhauling, saying, "I bought them for Ned. How is he coming?"

"Good. He'll be ready to ride in a day or two. Think 'em fellers will keep on goin'?"

"I think so," answered Jim, "if they don't stop to fight. I have got it up my nose that Johnny will kill both of them devils if he gets a good chance. Crowley pressed a good thing a little too far. Johnny was ready to pull all the time."

Billy advised Jim to pack up his outfit and move down to the creek just like he was on his way home. "Them devils may watch your moves. Crowley wants that money a darned sight worser than he wants Ned. Come back up when it gets dark, and we can talk things over and see what's best to do."

King led the two new horses up to the outside saplings and tied them in full view of any place the Crowley outfit might be watching him from. While packing up, King worked out the flour, dried meat and other chuck, with part of the bedding and other truck, kicked them back as Billy snaked them into the brush, without showing himself outside.

The change was made. King pulled out down to a small branch of Muddy creek, with his bulky packs, while Billy lugged his kitchen outfit up in the brush to his camp.

As Billy turned to take his first load, he saw Ned limping back up through the trees, with gun in hand. He had heard the loud talk and stood ready for battle. Billy roasted Ned for leaving camp. But the slippery coon allowed that if Billy could risk his life for a worthless black cuss like him, that he could afford to fight a little for Billy too.

King came up. A good fire screen was made and hot meals and black coffee loosened up Ned's grateful tongue. He told

King how he and Billy were boys together on adjoining squatter farms in the Ozarks.

Huddleston, his owner, had taken him, with his other negroes, south on the approach of the civil war. Ned had fallen in with the rebel army, stole chickens, butter and eggs for the officers, and helped the Mexican cook, who taught him the Spanish language.

He and the Mexican ran away. They worked on a cow ranch, and learned to rope and ride, where the man that stole the most cattle for the boss was called the best man. Here Ned became Tan Mex. He had a good stand in with Bob Ship, the foreman.

Tan Mex (Ned), and Taresa swam the Rio Grande river, stole cattle and horses from the Mexicans, swam them over to the Texas side and sold them to Bob Ship, for his boss. They finally got too careless and had to break up the ring.

Then, said Ned, he ran all over Mexico winning many big prizes for roping and riding. He won fame as a negro clown in the Mexican shows. He went from that to preaching to Mexicans, Indians and negroes. He went broke, got drunk and killed a brother of a priest. He then stole a horse and crossed back into Texas. Here he won a lot of money at Mexican monte, got shot at and left town. He worked on a ranch up on the Pacos river, where the priest, a brother of the fellow he had killed, found him out. The priest raised a big crowd of fighting Catholics, came to the ranch and intended to hang him. But Ned jumped out through the bunk house window, stole the foreman's best horse, and made a night ride out of the country. He landed in Wyoming, played tenderfoot, and talked as bad negro dialect as he could to hide his identity.

"You are a bad negro, Ned," said King. "Billy ought to of let you die, Ned. You, and all of your kind, are a burden to the rest of the world, and a nuisance to yourselves, and all who are around you. Don't you know it, Ned?"

Ned broke down and shed real tears as he answered King. He said he knew it, and wanted to know what else he could do, as he had sworn off stealing a thousand times, but, like the drunkard, he commenced again at the first good opportunity.

He touched his head and allowed that there was "something wrong up there."

"I dream about stealin,' runnin,' hidin' and fightin' nearly every night," said Ned.

He said he just could not stop stealing, but he had proven that he could stop any other bad habit except that.

Billy looked at King with moist eyes, and told him that he knew the negro was telling the truth. For he, himself, knew that Ned ought to have died with his thieving partners. But the thought of him laying wounded, and suffering for food and water was more than he could stand. He had gone against his own power of resistance to find and help the helpless, regardless of their kind.

"I jest couldn't help it, Jim," was his sobbing plea.

"That's all right, Billy," said King.

He jumped up and cut off one of the fat buck's ribs, and stuck it on a sharp stick, with the bone side facing the hot bed of red fire coals, to roast.

They finally decided King was to return home, while Billy was to see Ned safe on the cars for parts unknown. He was also to see that the horses and packs were cared for.

King had turned his ribs of venison, after the bone got hot, for a few minutes, and sprinkled on just a little salt and pepper. He then stuck the stick in the ground with the rib on it in front of him. The red, juicy flesh was sliced off with his sharp sheath knife—no bread or drink. The amount consumed in this manner at one meal by the average rider would more than offset what the ordinary cornbelt family would use in one day.

The two typical, western, early day hunters hurried away for King's camp. Billy got a line on King's purchases, returned to care for Ned, while King pulled out in the dark for his own camp.

Ned hobbled around and tested his leg. He and Billy finally pulled out. Billy offered Ned his choice of a horse and saddle, or he would land him on the railroad farther west.

Ned chose the railroad, saying, "No mo' saddle fo' me, Mistah Billy, I'se cooked."

Billy smiled and offered to bet Ned ten good buckskin that he would die in the saddle or darned close to one.

"I see dat bet, Mistah Billy, an' jest raise you ten mo' good skins, all tanned and smoked to boot. Ha, ha, ha."

Crowley's bulky pack of saddles had been concentrated into two bundles, with stirrups, cinches and latigoes all tucked in. These neat bundles and camp trappings were all packed on the one horse, without displaying any sign of extra saddles, the diamond hitch did the rest.

"There now!" exclaimed Billy, as he gave the pack the once over. "That horse can lope all day, jump ditches or buck to his heart's content, and that pack will stay with him."

"What's this?" asked Billy, as Ned handed him a heavy money belt.

"It's youahs, Bills, fo' all dat time you lost on dat trail foolin' with me."

Billy threw the belt down. "I didn't help yer for money, Ned."

Ned said no more, but when Billy reached home he found the belt, with several hundred dollars in it, tucked away in his canteens. (Leather saddle horn pockets).

Dark came on before Ned and Billy reached the last water they would find without a long drive. As they were approaching the water, Billy's horse shied around something in the sagebrush.

"It's a man, Ned! Yes sir! Stiff and cold," said Billy, while looking the object over.

"Look out, Billy, tha's a hoss down there," said Ned.

"It's all right, Ned. Thar's nobody round here, he's been dead too long for that."

Ned led the horse that was hung up in the brush up to Billy.

"It's Johnny's horse, Billy."

"By Gosh! Them devils have killed him," answered Billy. He's shot in the back."

"One mo' empty saddle, Mistah Billy. I s'pose I come next," said Ned.

"Yes," answered Billy. "The thieves have gone to helping the newcomers civilize the country by killing one another.



## CHAPTER XVI

### SEVEN EMPTY SADDLES



**A**FTER passing the dead body of his friend Johnny Simo, the tenderfoot negro felt a little skeptical about camping so near the place where the murder had been committed. Billy Buck, his guide, assured him that the murderers would not hang around the scene of crime any longer than it would take them to get away.

The following morning, after camping on the little creek, Billy looked the country over with his field glasses. He saw two extra horses, saddled and bridled, with reins down, besides the one they had found near the body of Simo. After a close look Billy informed Ned they were the horses Tip Crowley and Charley Powe had ridden away from the grove a few days before.

A close search was made, and a small bed of charcoals were found where they had apparently made a temporary camp-fire for luncheon.

Crowley's body, his six shooter by his side with one chamber empty, lay only a few feet from the dead embers. He had been shot above the left eye. Powe, Crowley's Mexican go-between, had two bullet holes in his breast and lay but a few feet from where Crowley had fallen. The four empty shells in Powe's pistol were proof that he had been in the fight.

There being one bullet in the front tree of Johnny Simo's saddle, and the fact that he was shot in the back, made it look to Billy as though Crowley had taken the first shot at Simo while he was standing on the opposite side of his horse. Evidently he had missed and hit the saddle. But Simo's first shot must have killed Crowley. Then Simo turned to Powe and shot him twice, while Powe has been shooting wild, until

Simo had mounted, or was mounting, when a bullet caught him in the back. This was Billy's version of the battle where no one was left to tell the story.

Ned was as silent as the dead during the investigation until after the bodies had been searched and everything of value taken, which was perfectly correct in those days, as they were miles from any one of authority that had any more right to the plunder than themselves.

"Now, Mistah Billy, if we jest had dat pick and shovel what I leff when I dug de hole fo' Mistah Pease, we mought put dese men away sawtah decent."

"Don't fret 'bout decency, Ned. These devils has left lots better men 'n they are on top of the ground.

"Do you know of any folks what belongs ter any of these three fellers what I can give the money to, or anybody they owe anythin' to?"

"No, Mistah Billy, none of dese kind of feddahs nevah has any right name nohow."

Billy had his mind on the Madam, a white, feminine discard, who once was Crowley's "camp Mrs.," but she had hooked up with Kelly, a government blacksmith, from over at Fort Dushane, Utah, and was not to be considered. He then turned to Ned with the suggestion that it would be foolish to allow the money to rot with the bodies, and offered him half of it.

Ned flatly refused, on the grounds that he had gotten many times that amount from his four dead comrades, and insisted that Billy never could be paid for what he had done for him, and others in need of help.

Ned insisted on leaving the lonesome camp. He said it made him think about what Tip Galt had told Taresa about all the horse thieves dying with their boots on. But Ned's wound was sore from his jaunt in the saddle. The three horses belonging to the dead horse thieves were gaunt and starved for water and feed. This caused a lay over for the day.

"I don't wonder at yer gittin' uneasy, Ned, fur if thar ever was a thoroughbred thief, it's your own black self. You've

been one ever since yer branded you'self with that sweet tater. And this makes seven of your own kind that's died that-a-way, within a week or so right here in these hills."

"Dat's de Gawd's truth, Mistah Billy, and I'se feelin' moughty strange, 'bout myself bein' leff on top o' de groun' to rot, Mistah Billy."

The following morning Billy and Ned pulled out for Green River.

Clouds of dust were seen to the right, on the old trail, as the higher ground was crossed. Great herds of cattle were pouring into this new country. Cattle were passed near Quaking Asp mountain. They were open range cattle, belonging to Archy and Duncan Blair, who were the first to utilize Uncle Sam's gift, pasture lands around here.

This meadow was on the trail between Rock Springs and the Brown's Hole country.

Green River was reached in the wee hours of the morning. A tap on A. G. Overholdt's old, log, livery stable window, south of the track, and they were admitted.

Overholt, the barn man, took the extra saddles to sell to newcomers on a commission. He also kept out twenty dollars that he said Crowley owed him.

Ned, with a handkerchief tied over his left ear, kept the secret under cover that he had lost all of his ear but the lobe. Billy was the only one living now since his partners had all been killed that knew how it happened.

Ned left on the train without a soul knowing that he had landed in Green River or how he had disappeared.

King was in town anxious to go farther west. Billy whacked up the spoils of his last trip with him, then bought him out. He departed for White Pine, Nevada, nursing a bad case of gold fever.

Another thief had been found shot to death by some unknown rancher over on Black's Fork. He, like Al Conners, over on Henry's Fork, had died with moccasins on.

Conner's Basin, on Henry's Fork, Utah, was named after this Al Conners, who was an early day horse thief. He died in

bed, from gun fire, long before the Basin was noted as a stock range.

Cattle herds were everywhere. Jack Gun had squatted, with a herd of Texas heifers, between Billy's camp and Green River. Later on he moved his herd sixty miles south, just over the line into Colorado, enlarging the settlement.

Lige Driskel had settled over at the mouth of Henry's Fork, with both horses and cattle. Shade Large got a glimpse of the prospects, and took up a ranch up the Fork from Driskels. Phil Mass, a white Mexican (good fellow), who didn't believe in letting the bunch grass and white sage all go to seed, put cattle on the creek, still higher up. Bob Herford, Uncle Jack Robison, of the Hudson Bay gang, hit the Fork still farther above. It was the same all over. Everybody wanted to get in on the free range business.

W. A. Johnson, Jimmy Reed, Frank Ore, Padsy Barret, and others too numerous to mention, were becoming stock ranchers. All of them were old-timers around this Green River country.

The country around here and Rock Springs was settled so fast with these ranchers and the townspeople that Sweet Water, the county seat, was soon moved down to Green River, which was on the railroad from South Pass. These things, with the incoming horses from California and Oregon, and better law enforcement, began to clear the atmosphere in the sagebrush.

The open or unsettled parts of the country, where the old-time outlaws could congregate and hold stolen stuff for an indefinite time in safety, were passing at a rapid rate. Even the Sweet Water country was being populated with ranchers. J. K. More, through some special privilege, had thrown in on the Shoshone Indian Reservation a big herd of cattle. Brown's Hole, the former winter home of trappers, hunters, thieves, and roving bands of Ute Indians, was getting its share of cattle. W. G. Tittsworth was using this desirable wintering place for his cattle.

J. S. Hoy came into the Hole from Evanstone, with cattle, and started getting titles to large tracts of meadow land down in this grand wintering place, which had heretofore been com-

mon property. Hoy gained disfavor among the freebooting element, tried to enforce the law to his own liking, and made a grand failure of it. Law and its enforcement were not yet on the market.

He who had a governor, or a balance wheel in his head, to regulate his tongue and action in such a manner that he could carry just enough water in both hands to keep peace with everybody, was the successful rancher.

The new rancher who had a creed of conduct of his own, and tried to force it upon others, without the necessary diplomatic twist in his speech and acts, was a sure loser.

These stock ranches were started up by men of all classes, from regular cowmen to business men. Both good men and notorious thieves were among them. Though most of them were single men, there were many squaw-men with families.

Tim Kinney, the railroad agent at Rock Springs, got the ranch fever and started in the cow ranch business.

Everybody seemed to want something for nothing, and Uncle Sam was offering it to them in his unsurveyed, free, pasture lands.

John C. Ferris, W. H. Mellor, the coal mine superintendent at Rock Springs, and others formed a live stock company and settled down on Billy Buck's squatter domain, with both horses and cattle.

Billy Buck had seen the old razorback swine box the smaller shoats to one side, while the big hogs gobbled up the best acorns for themselves, before he left the Ozarks, so he played the part of the smaller shoat and said nothing. The trailing and guiding business was about over anyway, so Billy took this imposition as a joke on the small shoat, and moved his jaunting camp south out of hearing of the steam whistles.

The Scribner Brothers, who settled with a herd of cows on the sage creek would now be Billy's nearest neighbors. These English neighbors proved to be a decent lot that believed in law and order, and helped in taming the wild west. They attended strictly to their own business, prospered, and sold out

to E. H. Rife, who came into the country from Denver, Colorado, with C. B. Sears.

These men and W. G. Tittsworth, and Old Doctor Paroons and his son, Warren, were among the first to bring white families to that once notorious rendezvous of outlawry. Such newcomers soon changed the reputation of Brown's Hole, so that people began to call it Brown's Park.

On one of Billy's jaunts he dropped into S. I. Field's general store, where the post office was kept in one end of the main building. The long, hungry looking old Yankee proprietor followed Billy out and plied his Yankee-like questions until Billy's head whirled.

He started in something like this: "Do all these newcomers live in Indian lodges and tents in the winter? They haul out flour, bacon, sugar, coffee and other supplies by the four-horse wagon loads, without any roads. How can they do that? They do not buy cook stoves or any other kind. Do they cook altogether on a fireplace? How do they tell their calves from their neighbors when they grow up? Is any of them trying to farm?" Fields went on, Yankee-like, asking another question before Billy could answer.

Billy staggered under the mental load, and began to answer as the question popped into his untrained thinker. He told Mr. Field that the usual high northwest winds swept the ridges and northwest hillsides, as well as some of the open flats, clear of snow, and the cattle browsed and grazed there, while the snow was deep elsewhere.

"It seldom rains in the fall of the year, you know," said Billy, "and never any dew falls here to bleach out the grass like it does back east." Billy went on. "This bunch grass never dies down in the ground; it is allus a little green down next ter the roots. The top cures up like hay, and will fatten stock faster after curin' than when it is green and washy."

Billy continued: "Down in the lower dry flats away from the mountains where there is no water is where the best winter ranges are found. Greasewood, shad-scale, white sage, and many varieties of salt weeds, which are of loosenin' nature are

found on these alkaline dry valleys where the cattle and horses lick snow for water. Bunch grass is also found here on the low ridges and hills. Deep, dry gulches, low, scrubby cedar jungles and bluff places furnish natural barns and sheds for shelter in blizzard times.

"Houses! Gee whiz, Mr. Fields, nobody has no business out of sight of the town in winter, less he can make a house out o' nothin'. Didn't I jest tell you how them cows found sheds and barns ter git in out o' the storm. A man orter know more n' a cow, hadn't he?"

"Yes," answered Fields, "but here's a man froze to death right down the river here, and Mr. Overholt froze his toes off at the same time." Field allowed there were places where a man couldn't help freezing, if caught out in one of the thirty or forty below zero windy snow storms.

"Thar hain't no such places in this country. It's up to 'im to watch the high mountains and if he can't see 'em he knows it's stormin' twixt him and them mountains. That's when all the cows and wild game heads fer the sheltered places. Outdoor fellers what knows how ter live off there gun hunts shelter and dry cedars, or big sagebrush and holes up among the rocks before dark. Just as the people do when in town they rush to your hotel."

Billy went on and told that these new ranchers lived in every kind of home from a dugout to a log cabin. Logs and poles for corrals were hauled for miles from the timbered gulches along the mountain foot hills. Cabins were covered with poles and dirt. There were no floors, the doors were of rude puncheon, and the two-story sleeping bunks along the walls were made of round willow poles, with a chopping ax and a two-inch auger. An extra room held the year's grub line, except fresh and dried meat, which many of them practically lived on.

All cooking was done in camp kettles, dutch ovens, skillets, frying pans and such fire place utensils. (Though later on things changed for a more modern way.)

Calves were driven in, and branded in corrals, or roped and branded with the owner's brand while still with their mothers.

"Most o' 'em," said Billy, "have ear marks, or dulap and other skin wattles made with a sharp knife as well as brands."

Billy saw that his old friend was really seeking the little facts in this new business, and did his best to give them.

Fields said, "Billy, in your jolting jaunts in the saddle you must have learned a lot of little things I would like to get first hand."

So Billy stuck to his answers more in detail than would be necessary to any one, excepting townspeople.

"Farming!" exclaimed Billy, who declared he had never seen a furrow turned in the country.

But he said that old Jimmy Goodson down in the Utah end of Brown's Hole had grown rutabagas, turnips and potatoes in a little garden, but nothing that would be called farming down in the Ozarks. A few of the ranchers cut a little wild hay on the meadow bottoms to feed a saddle horse that was kept up over night to drive in the saddle horses the next morning.

"Say," said Billy. "You remember that apple-faced, tarheel boy, Charley Sparks, what used ter come in here with his uncles, George and Sam Spicer, after grub?"

The old Yankee question box nodded.

"Well, he was so darned green when he first struck the country that his uncles darsent let him get out among the cattle for fear they might eat him up. Now, it took that young North Carolina gosling to teach us that we could raise somethin' ter eat besides meat out here in the land of sagebrush. He had seen the corn shuck mule collared, chain harnessed, single donkeys ticklin' the yeller clay back home to make two blades of grass grow where but one grew before. He took the hint, planted seeds in the dry dirt, gave 'em a drink out of the spring branch, and yer orter seen 'em jump out of the ground and reach up for warm sunlight."

"It is just such things as that boy is doing that will change this country from outlawry to civilization," said Mr. Fields.

"I dunno," remarked Billy. "The outlaws themselves are quitten' thar saddles 'thout anybody else's help.

"You asked me 'bout roads and thar hain't but one round



here, and tha call that one the Overland Trail. Otherwise, everybody makes his own road. He picks out the bare ridges, dodges the swales where big sagebrush catches the snow makin' snow drifts. He digs down the steep banks ter cross the dry washes. Sometimes they drive a wagon jest where they want the road, and drag a big log or somethin' along each wheel mark to rub off the bumpy sagebrush. Mostly they jest drive over them until the bumps are worn down."

J. H. Nason, Field's storekeeper, called to Billy's questioner. Billy hurried away to see the sheep swim Green River. The Keo Brothers, from California, had arrived, with thirty thousand sheep, to occupy the free antelope ranges. The idea of sheep swimming a river like Green River was new for Billy, who had the idea that a sheep would drown in a frog pond.

A few sheep were ferried over on the boat to do the bleating on the other side. The main herd was crowded down along the water's edge, under a cliff of rock, until they could go no farther without taking water.

A gang of shepherds were in the water pushing, pulling and forcing the sheep out in the water. Finally some old yew would see or hear one bleating from the opposite side, and strike across the river, drifting more and more with the current. Others would eagerly follow until the string of swimmers got to going down stream, instead of starting straight across at the going in point.

This bend in the string of swimmers from the current would increase until the outgoing sheep would have to swim up stream to make a landing. Then the string would have to be broken, and a new start made; this often took hours. Sometimes a day or more was lost in getting a new start.

After several thousand were crossed and held up along the banks by dogs, to coax the swimmers to come across, the alkali dust became so bad on that side that men couldn't be used on the opposite side at all. Dogs had to do this work, coached by their owners on the bluff from the other side of the river.

These dogs often ran over the crowded sheep's backs, and stood up on their hind feet to get the signal from their masters

on the other side of the river, as to what to do next. Sometimes it was to hold them closer, at other times it was to give back. Then again the signal might mean, "hold them where they are." If they halted for the day the signal would be, "let them go."

These dogs had but one master and he was usually a Mexican. The man was paid according to the worth of his dog, as well as himself. Some men had two dogs and got more pay. In this case, each dog went to camp for his meals when his master did, and took his dinner out of the same tin plate his owner had eaten off of.

Jimmy Reed rode up behind Billy where he sat on the hill overlooking the valley scene with his glasses.

"Hello, Billy! What do you know?" asked Jimmy.

"Well, I reckon I know that I'll never kick another dog as long as I live. Them thar dogs over cross the river thar, Jimmy, knows more n' lots of men. I reckon thar jest like children, that are raised to do jest what thar raised to be."

"These sheep means 'good-by antelope,' Billy," said Reed. "I'll bet there won't be tallow enough on the buck antelope kidneys to grease a bullet patch in five years from now. Did you ever see a country change so quick? We didn't used to think about money. Our guns and steel traps gave us food and clothing, we wanted nothing else. Now it's money, money, money, nothing but money is worth talking about."

"That's so," said Billy. "I heard Johnny Shearn say tother day that old Paddey Barret put in half a day to catch a flea, then tried to skin the little dickens for the hide and taller. If that's so I reckon we're gittin' civilized all right, Jim."

## CHAPTER XVII

### HOW THINGS WERE DONE



ILLY BUCK'S heretofore enjoyable jaunts through these quiet, lovable, scenic mountains, blessed with peace and plenty without the hand of man, were almost done.

The shriek of the mountain railroad engines was the signal for the almost unbelievable change that followed the approach of the Union Pacific railroad on the west slopes of the great mountain.

Billy, who had experienced a taste of the thrilling effect of freedom, and the exciting chase in the wilds of these mountains, was loath to accept the change from nature's way of living to man's tent town of rabble. This nature loving Ozarker was in a great school during the mushroom tent town days to study man in his unrestrained desire to get something for nothing. While he enjoyed the change for a short time, it was all distasteful to him, and he welcomed the incoming tenderfoot ranchers and the more up-to-date merchants, hoping for a betterment of the whole situation.

The building up of towns along the railroad had sent most of the undesirables of the tent towns scurrying for easier money into mining towns, lumbering camps, logging shacks, and such places. The better class of incoming citizens were largely men of families, who are the civilizers of all countries, and took their place.

The change along the railroad showed a more rapid progress towards civilization than the new squatter ranchman in his rudely constructed home of ranch buildings.

Though Billy had no use for anybody's old town, he worked away on his ranch, trying to arrange more comfortable quarters

at his new location. While Billy was struggling away at his task of building the cabin, he heard a familiar voice.

"Hello there, Billy. What do you think you are doing out here thirty-five miles from the steel rails?"

"Steel rails," said Billy, as he approached Ed Forkner, a squaw-man friend of his. "Ed, I hain't got much use fur them steel rails, 'specially at close range, thar scarin' all the game away. I had to come way out here to get a piece of fat meat. What do yer know about things, anyway?"

"Well," said Forkner, "I know if you want to save a tender-foot doctor from going crazy you will have to go down to the mouth of Salt Wells Creek. I have told him that if I found you in camp that you would meet him there at sun-up tomorrow morning. I have a letter here from S. I. Fields, who, with other business men, ask you to go to Doctor Gipson's aid. He has lost his whole herd of cattle on the trail down on Bitter Creek, and his men have got scared out for fear of losing their hair, and refuse to gather the scattered cattle."

"How many cattle did he have?"

"Something over fourteen hundred," answered Forkner. "This herd belongs to Kiser and Gipson, whose brand 'K' is on the left hip."

Billy looked up at the sun. "I'll have ter go. Ed, you'll help me, won't yer?"

"Yes, I will have to. There's no reliable help in town and if that fact gets noised around the herd won't last long."

Ed and Billy reached a point in sight of the junction of Salt Wells and Bitter Creek during the night. They located in a dry wash for a nap, preparatory for the strenuous day's work that must follow.

It was a dry, deserty, barren, alkali country, poorly watered and short feed anywhere near the old trail. Billy, knowing every watering place and the salt feed on such locations, decided that would force the cattle to seek water before they settled for even a day or so. Billy and Ed had discussed their plan as how best to round in these cattle short-handed before they lay down for their nap.

The sun was kissing the east faces of the highest, brown soap hilltops when the glasses revealed the doctor and a well known "tough nut" from any place in the territories, who was going here by the name of Jack Fitch.

"That won't do at all," said Forkner. "I'll bet that fellow and Charley Williamson has been working on them cattle already. Fitch and Charley were around town, and had a chance to get this tenderfoot's story through Gipson's frightened men. These rustlers, perhaps, have already heard even more than Gipson can tell us about these cattle."

When the two men reached a point within a couple of hundred yards of the meeting place, Billy left Forkner behind and rode out of the dry ditch in full view of the doctor and Fitch.

Fitch stopped, but the doctor rode up and asked, "Is that Mr. Forkner back there?" On learning that it was, he asked, "Is this Mr. Buck?"

"I'm the man what answers when they call Billy Buck," answered Billy.

Billy saw at once that the doctor regarded him with suspicion. Billy's fringed buckskin garb, even to knee leggings and moccasins, as well as his belt ornaments, which bristled with cartridges, six-shooter, sheath knife and tomahawk, along with Billy's plain, rough, ungrammatical speech, was not in line with what he had expected. Billy had been recommended as one who could and would do just what was to be done. He had been recommended in the towns on the railroad as being perfectly reliable in every way. The young Missourian could see intuitively that the St. Louis doctor expected a more genteel looking person, more like Mr. Fitch, who had won the doctor's confidence by his white collar and oily tongue.

Billy signaled Ed Forkner, whom Mr. Gipson had sent out to the ranch after Billy. Ed came over where the doctor and Billy were, motioning towards Fitch, who had turned and was riding away in the direction of the old abandoned Salt Wells stage station. "I guess Jack thinks we are getting too thick for him around here," remarked Ed.

The doctor turned in the saddle and remarked that he had

engaged Mr. Fitch to show him the designated place where he was to meet Billy.

Billy leaned over on his saddle horn. Looking the doctor in the eye, he said, "Doctor, if we undertake to gather these cattle fur yer, we pick our own help. We orter be at work right now. Time means cattle for yer this mornin'."

"Well, I will give you ten dollars a day if you will gather all my cattle that you can and turn them over to my men down near Rock Springs, or Green River."

"Gather all you can," repeated Billy. "We can't do it, Mister."

The doctor broke down, saying, "I am a ruined man—every dollar I have is in these cattle. Here I am in a helpless condition, with my cattle scattered all over this wild desert, and not a friend that will help me save my family from poverty. Mr. Kiser is a rich man but I am not; it will ruin me."

"Hold on, Mr. Gipson!" Billy doesn't mean that we will not do everything we can for you in safety to ourselves. Billy knows every thief in this country and has the confidence of most of them. He may be able to save many of your cattle by argument in your favor, but, in case of failure, and if it is necessary to fight a gun battle against great odds, he means we can't afford to do that. That wording 'all you can,' which you used, means to him that we will get all the cattle or die in the attempt."

"Oh well, I understand then. Now, you boys, do the best you can in your own way. That's all I could ask."

The doctor related just how it came about. They had struck bad alkali water, and that just in holes here and there, and strong alkali at that, and short feed. They lost their sore-backed, played out saddle horses, and when they saw some Indians, concluded their horses had been stolen. The men were all scared and refused to look any further for the horses.

"Did you, or any of your men, get close enough to speak to any o' them Indians?"

"No."

"Then it's bullets to buckskins they were tame Indians, or white men with blankets on them," said Forkner.

"That's enough," said Billy. "Where was the tail end of the herd when you quit 'em?"

"Just below Black Buttes station, pointing up the creek," answered the doctor.

"That's all we want ter know," said Billy. "Hurry back to Rock Springs, and tell your men thar hain't a hostile Indian in two days' ride from this place. Send 'em back up the creek with your mess wagon, anywhere along from here down. We'll run your horses in with the first cattle, that will give 'em horses to handle the cattle on and get 'em out of our way."

The doctor was told not to tell any one what he was trying to do.

"I have already told them," said the doctor.

"Well," replied Billy, "you haven't told 'em anythin' 'bout our plan of gatherin' and handlin' the cattle. If you depend on the wrong men, as yer have already done, from what we can see around here, you won't have cow tails enough left ter make a good hair rope when you leave Bitter Creek. I live by playin' fair with both kinds of men and keepin' my mouth shut. You listen ter Old Fields, and them what he tells yer are all right, and yer won't lose many cattle."

"That's square talk, Mr. Gipson," said Forkner. "Billy understands all these people that might try to harm you. He can do more for you without a gun than all the officials and all the guns they can carry, put together. And he will do it, too, when he has truth and justice on his side, as he has now, and under a salary, with a poor man and a family to plead for. These rowdies are not all fools or heartless. They are a daring, fighting, courageous set. Fair, courageous, moral persuasion from one they respect as they do Billy is stronger than bullets in the end, Mr. Gipson. You better leave it all to him."

"Say, we're burnin' too much daylight, fellers, let's act, and talk when we can't do nothin' else." The restless worker was getting uneasy, as he glanced at the climbing sun, and faced the doctor.

The doctor was told to get S. I. Fields, of Green River, to send a man after Johnny Pare, and put him in charge of the cattle. Johnny was dependable, and knew where to find feed and water. The doctor was to have his own men do the work of handling the cattle; this would prevent him from getting too many thieves in his employ.

Two days after Dr. Gipson left Billy and Ed, his men had recovered the most of their horses, which had been branded with a "K" the same as the cattle. Dr. Gipson's own cow-punchers were now working the herd down stream as fast as Billy and Ed could push them down to the water from the dry, timberless hills, where they had gone for better feed.

When about twelve hundred had been gathered and were under control, Johnny Pare came and moved the outfit across Green River, and held them over on Black's Fork, where the outside stragglers were eventually added to the herd.

When Johnny Pare came, he had brought Ike Randle with him, to help Billy and Ed gather the cattle. Randle had come through on the trail some time before this, while working for a drover by the name of Norris, who had gotten into just such trouble as the doctor. Randle had stopped back behind the herd to gather lost cattle. Pablo, a Mexican, undertook to bluff Randle out of gathering the cattle. Pablo ran a whizzer on Randle at the table in Field's hotel at Green River, before all the boys. Randle accepted the challenge, and they stepped out to fight a fistic battle. Pablo started to use his knife, and Randle shot him.

While the people were gathering around the scene, Billy motioned to Ed Forkner's horse, and told Randle where to stop. Billy assisted him in getting by with his shooting scrape. This sent Randle to aid Billy and Forkner with the Gipson cattle.

While the three were working the outskirts of the range for the Kiser and Gipson cattle, they picked up the trail of a large bunch headed north, with pony tracks, showing the cattle had been driven. Billy followed, and found where the cattle had been allowed to spread out to feed, all headed in the same direction up a wide, sandy flat. Being an expert trailer, Billy, by



crossing and recrossing the trail counting trails of individual cattle as he went, soon decided there were about one hundred and fifteen head of cattle in the bunch.

When Billy, still on the trail, reached a small spring at the foot of Jack Morrow mountain, he found a stick stuck in the ground at the head of the spring, with a note in the split end, which read, "I guess you have followed us far enough, Billy."

He took a drink, watered his horse, filled his water bottle, glanced up at the narrow pass between the mountains where the cattle were headed for, and called it a day's work on that trail.

Billy knew the thieves didn't want to kill him; they intended to keep the stolen cattle. If they had wanted to kill him, they would not have left the note, but fired a shot in the pass, to end Billy's interference in their stealing game. It was no trouble for him to call the turn on this bunch, as there had been so many of their kind gone to sleep in the past, never to wake up again. Billy could guess closely as to "who was who."

Some little time after Billy had turned back at the warning notice, he rode over on a hill to his left to take a look, with the glasses, from higher ground. He wanted to look off toward Black Rock, as Randle had gone in that direction, to circle outside of all tracks to see that nothing had gone out in that direction; while Forkner was working off to his right.

While searching the surrounding country with his glasses, Billy saw at some distance, a man driving a small bunch of cattle towards the spring where the notice had turned him back. The country being so near void of water in the direction from which the cattle were coming, Billy decided it was Randle going to the spring he had just left for water.

Billy had filled his water bottles at the spring so he set out to head off Randle and give him a drink. This would save him a long ride with his little bunch of cattle before sending them to the main herd.

Billy lost track of the man and cattle, in the rolling foothills, while trying to cut in ahead of them. Billy thought he must be near their line of travel, so he left his horse and

climbed the highest knoll in sight, to see if he could see them. While thus engaged, the lead cattle began coming out from behind another nearby knoll. The cattle stopped as if tired. No man appeared behind the cattle as Billy expected.

After waiting what seemed a much longer time than necessary, Billy became uneasy, for if it was Randle, and he had concluded to leave the cattle and lope up to the spring for a drink while the cattle rested, he would have had to cross the valley in full view from where Billy was watching.

The report of a rifle and the singing of a bullet overhead settled it. Something was wrong. Perhaps Randle had shot a sage hen, or a jack-rabbit, for lunch, when he reached the spring. If that was the case it was a glancing bullet he had heard, as it came from the other side of the hill. Not seeing or hearing anything more, Billy immediately began investigating.

The now anxious youngster mounted his horse and galloped out in the open flat behind the hill where the shot had come from. A regular fusillade burst forth as he entered the flat in full view of the scene. He spurred for a near-by knoll to cover his horse. The firing ceased.

Billy cried, "Is that you, Ike Randle?"

"Yes," was the answer that came from behind the dead horse, from where he had been shooting. "Look out, Billy! There's a fighting devil in a little ditch right by that saddle horse down there."

After considerable maneuvering, and the use of the glasses, Billy discovered what he thought was the man in the ditch, and called to Randle, "Kick up a dust, Ike, right where yer last saw him."

"Bang!" went Ike's gun, and the dust arose right where Billy had spotted the object that he thought might be a man. Not a stir came from the ditch. All attempts to get an answer from that location was futile; not a word or move came from the ditch.

"Stir him up with a bullet," said Randle. "I can't see him

from here; all I ever saw was his head after he shot my horse."

"Who is it, anyway?" asked Billy.

"I'll never tell you! He wouldn't let me come up to him at all," said Randle. "I tried, by motions and yelling at him, to get him to drop the cattle. I knew they were ours for I had trailed them where they went out from Bitter Creek."

"What you going to do? Hain't you going to plug him to see whether he is dead or playing possum on me?"

"I don't like ter kill a dead man, Ike. I'll plow up the dust alongside of his head an' see if he moves." "Bang!" went his gun. "Not a move, Ike," shouted Billy.

"Come over here, Randle. I'll hold my gun on the feller, he can't see me, but if he puts his noggin up ter shoot at yer, I'll bust 'im. Make a run 'til yer reach the knoll."

The man proved to be dead. Ike's bullet had hit him in the throat, breaking his neck. He was set up against the bank of the ditch, with his hat on. First one, then the other, took a look at him while the other held his head. Both Billy and Randle declared they had seen him before.

"I know 'im now," said Billy. "He came up here with Colonel Myer's herd from Texas. See this address on this old, dirty, ragged envelope."

Randle read the dimmed address: "Robert Ship, Paris, Idaho."

The date was obliterated, both on the postmark and the fragment of the letter they held. Randle took a sheet of the letter, which Ship had apparently been using for cigarette paper, from the inside, and read aloud:

That squaw Tickup, and her daughter have got into more trouble at the Fort and Mincy told that Ned had sent money. And that Clouse Caseburg was taking them to Oklahoma and she was going to school down there.

Where is Galt and the boys, now? We will be there.

So long,

Jack B.

"That's Jack Bennett," said Billy. "He's been over 'bout Fort

Hall and has been writin' Bob Ship the news. I'd give a 'V' this very minute ter know when that thing was wrote."

"Bob Ship! That's him. King told me all 'bout him. Jim went ter Raft river with the Colonel Myer's outfit, and he and Jim got chummy and he told Jim that he was one of the boys from Texas. You know I came through with the Myers' outfit from the North Platte river to Green River, then Jim went the rest of the way with the herd over ter Raft river in the edge of Idaho."

Bob Ship received a more decent burial than most of the bad ones.

Billy explained to Randle that he had been warned to quit the trail of the big bunch. He had taken the hint, turned tail and saw him on his return.

The straggling cattle were all gathered in. The doctor wintered his herd in Brown's Hole that winter. Gipson raised Billy's salary after the work was done.

Before spring the doctor received an unsigned letter, telling him just where to go over in the Bear Lake country, in Idaho. He was told to try and buy cattle, as a ruse, and watch for cattle rather freshly branded on the left hip with a wagon wheel brand, with only six spokes in the wheel. "This hub of wheel covers the 'K' on about one hundred and fifteen 'K' cattle," read the letter. "They are yours. Keep your mouth shut, a word might mean death to a friend."

Gipson got the cattle, though he never did learn how it all happened.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### YOU NEVER CAN TELL WHO IS WHO



ED HUDDLESTON, the tenderfoot negro of the western wilds, had caught a glimpse of a new trail through life. The object lessons which had been thrust before him by Billy Buck, King and others had imbued Ned with better thoughts.

The gruesome scenes of his murdered outlaw friends had left their penetrating sting, which had aroused the inner man to a reformable state of mind. He must now do something good in the world himself; heretofore his life had been a series of crime. Ned realized this, and while his pockets and money belts were overflowing with ill-gotten gains, from chance happenings, now was the time to test his mental strength.

The snorting puffs and grinding wheels of the west bound train that was wheeling him out of Green River, Wyoming, were unheard by Ned. His lippy form filled the seat in a deserted smoker; his mind was on the man he was leaving behind. The man, who when but a boy, had seen him and his black brothers face the whipping post for no other reason than a misconstrued idea of subjugation. Ned knew that Billy's sympathetic heart had gone out to his black playmates at that time. He also knew that time, among such misguided freaks as himself, had not caused Billy to forget that it was the duty of the strong to help the weak, so that they might rise to help others.

These new thoughts of helping the helpless, instead of stealing ponies from the strong for the exciting chase that followed in escaping, and the thoughts of patronizing the lessons taught him by Billy, were plowing great roads through Ned's partly addled, unbalanced brain when he reached White Pine, Nevada.

Ned found Jim King, Billy's old hunting partner, and arranged with him to have Clouse Caseburg assist him. Ned paid

the bill, and King was soon on the scene. He hired Caseburg to extricate Ned's old, helpless Shoshone squaw, and her girl, Mincy, from the clutches of Jack Bennett, a notorious outlaw, who was using her and her young girl as a blanket to cover up illegal whiskey traffic among the Indians and soldiers.

In due time, Caseburg located in Oklahoma and placed Mincy in school.

Old Tickup and Mincy shed their blankets for more modern garbs, and were given a good home at Ned's expense.

Ned's habit of changing his name every time he moved camp in the more chaotic days was still in force. Now, since he had decided to be a better negro, and having besmirched his right name, Ned Huddleston, he adopted the name of Isom Dart.

Under his new name, Isom, by keeping himself strictly separated from Tickup and Mincy, he kept them in ignorance of his presence in the country.

A part of this ruse to cover up Isom's past history was that he and Clouse Caseburg were not alone known as strangers in the country, but also as strangers to each other.

The both rented land from the Indians and proved to be successful cotton growers, and were looked upon as valuable assets to the territory by the whole community.

Isom and Caseburg were successful in making both money and friends. Paying cash for everything made each one a handy man in his own neighborhood.

Mincy grew up to be a handsome, bright young squaw, admired by many of the young men.

Isom was seeing the happiest days of his life, as he was hoping some day to claim her as his housekeeper.

The change from scenes of surface graveyards, where his outlaw friends had fallen at the end of their last crime, to peaceful industry, with three square meals a day and a comfortable bed, was a welcome revelation to Isom.

Isom Dart's kleptomaniacal tendencies for once were held in check by his new, benevolent venture in helping some one who could not help herself. The charitable acts that Billy Buck had bestowed upon him when he was even more helpless than Mincy,

had budded, bloomed and borne fruit, which would have ripened into a highly pleasing success but for the introduction upon the scene of one Nat Rasper.

Nat Rasper was known as a single young man, with no particular home and a "self-oiling tongue." He drove into the territory one of the finest white-legged, sorrel teams ever seen in the neighborhood. He had plenty of money, a fancy top buggy, dressed well, and made one-half of his buggy seat on inviting place for the giddy girls of the place.

Mincy soon fell for the bland Texan's intriguing snare, and Caseburg's advice fell on deaf ears. Thinking to save his charge from running headlong into ruin, he bought the team and rig. This made matters still worse. Mincy soon had Nat Rasper on the seat with her just the same. Caseburg's reasonable pleadings, with both Mincy and Nat Rasper, went unheeded.

The moonlight jaunts increased until Caseburg felt forced to use stronger language. This made it necessary for Caseburg to apply beef steak poultices to both eyes, and care for several jack-knife cuts that Nat had inflicted during the fray. Caseburg was no gunman but Nat Rasper became uneasy, thinking that some of Caseburg's friends might lessen his chances for a long life, and fled.

Vacation from the school came. Mincy stayed with a classmate friend in the country, when her mother, Tickup, took the smallpox, and she was left there for the time.

Caseburg's swollen eyes were a little better. He could now see over his puffed cheeks, without rearing his head back to see over the bloodshot "moss agates" (black eyes) below. His wounds were all healed, except his internal heart wound, which was fast becoming a chronic sore, called hatred, that seldom heals on a moody man of his makeup. He, like Isom, now had a weather eye on the girl. He told Isom that he would have Nat Rasper's head if he had to rob his grave to get it.

Isom did not take things as seriously as Caseburg, and advised letting Rasper go until they were foot loose. Caseburg's revengeful nature was calling for him to take up Nat's trail

before it got too cold to follow; he was growing desperate. The beating Nat had given him kept him brooding over his wounded pride until he made Isom agree to close up all business odds and ends, so in case they heard of Rasper, that they could go get him.

"Dat Mincy gal is de one to watch, Mistah Casebu'g. Dat rascal's goin' to hang roun' dat gal, see if he don't. When da's a woman in de case, you knows jest whah to set de trap fo' de fool man; I knows dat all mah life, Mistah Casebu'g."

Caseburg had a friend who kept him posted as to Mincy's moves in the country.

When Tickup was taken down with the smallpox, Caseburg moved into a near-by small outhouse, where he cared for Tickup up to her death, batching and living alone, as the neighbors were all scared of the dreaded disease. There being no room for Mincy, he left her in the country until he could get the house fumigated and cleaned up.

During the time of getting ready for Mincy's homecoming, Isom's old field boss, a trusty Indian, had been sent out to the ranch country to buy horses. Isom being an expert horseman, had this man pick up the better wild horses, while he broke and trained them for the field.

Mule buyers were picking up all the cotton mules to go further south, making an increasing demand for horses that had been broke. Isom was taking advantage of the opportunity for honest money.

Isom saw his man, and a young white lad, corralling a bunch of fresh horses so he hurried out and saw the white lad gallop away as his Indian was closing the gate. Isom's eyes grew larger and larger, as the old Indian unfolded his story of how he had crawled under the loose hay beside the rancher's stack to sleep for the night, when some other fellows came and laid down and talked with the fellow who beat Caseburg's face all black.

"You mean dat high-flutin' Nat Rasper what made Mistah Casebu'g's face look like all de mules on de fahm had kicked 'em?"



"That's him," said the Indian.

Isom learned from the old man's broken story that the white boy who had helped him with the horses was called Pigeon by the other fellow that the boy called Jack, and that sometimes Nat Rasper called him Bennett when he talked.

Isom did not let any grass grow under his feet after he received this tip from the man in getting it to Caseburg, who sold his cotton in the field and cleaned up all his belongings, except his fancy team and buggy, which he was going to take over to Isom the following morning.

Caseburg knew Jack Bennett as an outlaw who had held Tickup and Mincy under a gun title up near Fort Hall, in Idaho, where Ike Frop and his squaw, through King, had rescued them from the outlaw rendezvous and turned them over to Caseburg on the railroad.

Not knowing the object of Jack Bennett and Pigeon's presence in the territory, Caseburg wanted to get foot-loose at once. While he did not like to take from any man that which he could not return, it began to look like kill or be killed to Caseburg.

The night before he was to turn his team and buggy over to Isom to be looked after, he was awakened by a series of light knocks at his door. A feeble voice, like that of a girl called, in the Shoshone tongue, "It's me, Case. I'm sick. Open the door." The words, coming in the girl's own tongue, dispelled all doubt that it could be any other than Mincy.

As the door swung open, Pigeon, with a blanket about his head and shoulders, Indian fashion, and saying, "I'm sick," crowded past Caseburg. As Caseburg turned to look after the supposed girl's wants, a blanket was thrown over his head from behind, and he quickly landed face down on his bed.

"A cry of resistance means death," said a voice.

He was bound and gagged, and lashed to his bed in such a way that resistance, speech, or a cry for help, was impossible. He was threatened and punished to make him either nod or shake his head, when he was asked if his tin can bank was hidden here, or there. True to his make-up, he sulked to the last. The pressure of cold steel to his bare flesh only meant

another iron band to his obstinacy. He revealed nothing; his tin cans were safely hidden.

Isom had grown uneasy and sold his cotton in the field. He was making a clean-up, the same as Caseburg had. He was now ready for the saddle. If occasion required it, Mincy could be left with Ben Burley and his wife, Waneta.

This caused Isom to send his old man over to tell Caseburg to come over as he wanted to see him. The old man returned and said that Caseburg had not been seen or heard of for several days by any of the neighbors, and as every one was shy of the premises, on account of smallpox, no one had investigated.

Isom returned with his man the following morning. The barn was empty, team and buggy were gone, and Caseburg was found, in a famished condition, lashed to his bed. He had been robbed, beaten and tortured to make him tell where his money was hidden. The sixty odd dollars found on his person did not satisfy the robbers; they had been expecting to find a tin cache of several thousand.

The interior of the small room was a total wreck. The puncheon floor was torn up and the dirt below had been dug over. Every foot of space from this dirt to the clapboard roof had been thoroughly searched. Caseburg's pockets had been turned; and the heavy seams and laps in his clothing had been ripped asunder in their mad search for the money they believed him to have.

A neatly folded five-dollar greenback bill found near the log door sill, was the only real signs of wealth to be seen in the topsy-turvy little room. The puncheon flooring and debris were piled about as though a colony of huge pack rats had been busy for weeks.

Caseburg's friend, who was supposed to be keeping tab on Mincy, while she was in the country, was on hand. He declared that he had been watching for Caseburg for several days, to tell him that Mincy had left her schoolmate's place one night, about the time of the robbery. Mincy had gone with some young fellow on horseback, reporting that the house had been

fumigated and things cleaned up, and she was supposed to come home.

Isom slipped a little roll of green paper into Caseburg's hands, saying, "Dah is mo' whah that comes from, Mistah Caseburg." He had his old man clean Caseburg up and move him into his own house, and care for him until he could care for himself. Caseburg's farm boss, Ben Burley, and his wife, Waneta, came home from their fishing trip and took charge of Caseburg. Isom's old Indian did as he was told, and delivered his whole story of what he had heard, while under the hay, in the presence of both Caseburg and his man Ben.

As a ruse, Caseburg discharged Ben, giving him a letter of recommendation as a reliable, worthy, competent man, as a foreman on either a cotton farm or stock ranch.

Isom gave his old Indian a team and wagon, and such farm implements as one man would want for his own use. He knew the value of a friend in such localities as that, and was willing to pay in advance.

Now that Mincy was gone, the whole community as well as Caseburg, blamed Nat Rasper for the whole affair. In the absence of any real, effective law, the country was full of volunteer searchers seeking a clue to Nat Rasper's hiding place, or the direction that he had fled.

Caseburg's linguistic, half-breed, Indian foreman had hardly unharnessed his team, before he was piling more necessities in the wagon. He pocketed his recommendation from the last man he had worked for and was off. Isom's old Indian gave him directions, and in due time, Ben Burley and his wife, Waneta, drove his wagon and kids up to the ranch house where Nat Rasper had been working.

Ben got the job of building the fence, which Nat Rasper had left unfinished. The rancher was not at home but his wife set him to work. The tepee was pitched and supper was steaming when the ranch foreman rode up.

"Goin' to put up the pasture fence fur the old man, are ye?" asked the ranch foreman.

"No!" exclaimed Ben Burley, "I am just going to dig the

holes and set the posts. The woman said the foreman would do all the hard work."

The foreman spurred his horse up a little closer, stared at Ben for a moment, then sprang off his horse, saying, "For God's sake, Ben! I kinder reckoned I knowed that voice when you fust opened up. How are you, anyway, Ben?"

"Never felt better, unless it was the night we took that Mexican gang to a cleaning over in the Panhandle that night."

"Say, pard, didn't them devils go when we opened up on 'em? They never even stopped for the funeral; a feller what never seen a Mexican stampede from black powder smoke would of thought they had eaten something what didn't agree with 'em, and had to see the doctor right away."

Ben's wife, Waneta, couldn't stand it any longer, and came out to receive a hearty, "Hello, thar, Waneta!" from Dick Hooten, the ranch foreman. "By gosh, Waneta, it makes me feel like old times to meet you folks again. Hain't ye a bit ashamed of yourself," said Dick, "to turn a bird like me down fur a homely cuss like Ben here?"

"No, not on your life, I hain't," was Waneta's smiling answer. "Ben hain't no gun toter, wild bronco maverick chaser any more, he's a regular daddy man now, Dick."

Turning to Ben, Dick exclaimed, "By Gosh! that sounds like she had you broke to halter and spur both, at one settin', Ben. How'd she do it?"

"She made me sell my gun, quit stealin' and tryin' to get somethin' for nothin', break my bottle and go to work. I did and we have made money and friends ever since."

"Why didn't ye set him to preachin', Waneta? He knows more to preach about than all the priests over at the mission put together. Say, 'fore I forget it, Ben, Jack Bennett and a tough young gosling, just a bit too big to go in his shirt tail, that Jack calls Pigeon, came in here tother day with a band of northern horses. The old man bought the whole shootin' match and I'm expectin' him home any time now. He went in to Fort Smith to settle up with Jack for the horses."

"What become of the boy, Pigeon?" asked Ben. "Is he around the ranch?"

"Oh, no, he left with Jack and Nat Rasper, a feller that the old man had building this pasture fence. Anyway, Rasper had stolen a fine pair of drivers and a fine buggy, two or three years ago from a banker down in Arkansas.

"Now, I'm not hankerin' to talk out of school, Ben, but you orter know how to talk if any of them Fort Smith fellers comes nosin' around the ranch to see what they can learn about the boys.

"You see, Rasper sold this fancy team to an old skinflint here in the territory that Jack and Rasper both had it in for. This rich old codger had a dandy young Indian gal, that he had in school down here somewhere, and she was dead gone on Nat Rasper. Jack wanted to get the gal back up to Wyoming, near where they had stole her and her Shoshone mother from him in the first place. Rasper was done with her anyway, and he was going to take her up across the unsettled country up to Brown's Hole, and turn her over to Jack up there, and Jack was going to take her on up to Fort Hall, in Idaho."

The boss went on, telling Ben how the three of them had gone down and cleaned up the old miser, and dressed up the gal, man-fashion, in Pigeon's clothes. Nat and she were now making night rides up across country toward Trinidad, and were headed for the Brown's Hole country, while Pigeon was taking the buggy to Fort Smith, with a pair of little cotton mules, so the buggy and sorrel team wouldn't be noticeable as belonging together when they crossed the line over into Arkansas.

Jack was to lead the sorrel drivers in to the horse buyer, get his money, settle up with the old man for the herd of horses, and take the train before anybody missed the old miser and his team.

Ben stared at Dick, amazed at what he had just heard, and said, "Them fellows are just as good as caught right now, Dick. A man can't get very far, without losing men, when he

just plays his own checkers. The man on the opposite side of the board might not move just as you figure he will."

"Tha'll never get caught, Ben. Nobody ever gets caught in this darned territory, and Arkansas is 'bout the same thing."

The day following Dick rode up, where Ben was wrestling with a big fence post. "Did I tell you about a mountain guide, that Jack calls Billy Buck, killing our old pal, Bob Ship, up in Wyoming, and 'bout old Tan Mex having this Indian gal's mother for a squaw up there?"

"No," said Ben.

"Well, he did," Jack said. "Most all of us thought that nigger was a fool but I guess we've got another thought coming. Tan Mex played himself off up there for a real tenderfoot nigger, and they swallowed it hook, line, bob and sinker."

Dick Hooten, the ranch foreman, was a good stockman. He rode and roped well, but he was no match for his reformed friend, Ben Burley, when it came to fishing in deep water. Ben had quit fishing through thin ice for bony suckers, that yielded no pearl. No! he had long since reformed, and had been casting his hook into the deeper channels of men's business affairs, where his cork had floated around a long time with nothing but minnow nibbling. But faith in his wife's belief that honesty paid kept him fishing for a better standing among men of character.

Caseburg had noticed the minnows liked the bait and took the hook for three seasons. He found no deception in the bait on Ben Burley's hook; it was baited with just bits of all the qualifications it takes to make a trustworthy, honorable, upright man.

The old stock rancher where Dick was working had learned all this, and he took Ben's bait of honesty, which all business men are eagerly searching for.

Now that Caseburg had no further use for his foreman, as he was going to take up Nat Rasper's trail along with Isom, Ben had caught one of the highest salaried foremanships in the territory with his manhood bait.

The old stock ranchman drove the fancy sorrel team and

buggy home. He told Ben to hurry back home, move into the house Caseburg had given him, and take charge of everything that Caseburg and Isom had left behind.

He said to Ben, "Look after the rent, and cotton in the fields. Keep your standing with Dick, my stock foreman, but never betray his confidence. I am keeping next to these thieving outlaws for my own protection. You never can tell who is who nowadays, Ben. Caseburg and your honorable servant, Bud Benler, attended the same school. They both belong to the same lodge in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

"Jack Bennett and Pigeon are both in jail at Fort Smith.

"Caseburg has sworn to get Nat Rasper's head if he has to scratch it out of his grave with his bare hands."

Twenty days later, Bud Benler received a note, special delivery by an Indian friend of Ben Burley. The note read:

My dear brother:

Seven days from the ranch we found Mincy's remains. Clear case of fiendish desertion on a desert, without food or water. Pay on delivery twenty-five dollars.

Your brother,

Claude Casebeer.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A HUMAN PENDULUM



IT WAS a question in the minds of many when the steel rails first reached the west slope, whether they were bringing in civilization or demoralization. There was no question, however, but that the first arrivals by rail were certainly bedlamites. While it took a peaceful home and mother influence from twenty to thirty years to settle the average youth down to a state of civilization, it only took about that many days or months, under this environment, to transform the weaker ones into howling, drinking, wild gunmen of the far west. There was no escape from this school of crime for the new arrival. He knew nobody and nobody knew him; he had no other place to go.

It took experienced men to get out in the hills, with horse and gun, away from these hell holes in the tent towns, while every open door in the camps and tent towns beckoned him to enter. They were the only inhabited places in sight; every door was a main entrance to this high school of destruction.

The principals in these death holes were once the managers, owners or frequenters of protected clearing houses of sin and crime in the great far-away eastern and western cities. Their assistants were once the sluggers and robbers of the ram cat alleys of the same cities, and had brought their text books with them.

After this school of bedlamites had closed and passed on, the railroad began to bring in another class of people. Prospective business men, professional office men, ranch seekers, miners, prospectors and many others of a better class now filled the west-bound passenger coaches. Long trains of immigrant cars filled with everything, from a new born babe to a white-haired old grandfather, began to arrive from the overstocked European



homes. Many of them headed for Utah to serve God according to Brigham Young and his twelve apostles. Many were dropping off at every coal mining town to meet friends, families and sweethearts, who had been sent American earned dollars to pay their passage. Rock Springs got a goodly number of these foreigners.

"Where you goin', Billy?" asked Charley Sparks.

"Come on boy, the circus is on. Don't yer see the imported animals climbin' off that immigrant train?"

The two young backwoods investigators looked and listened. The atmosphere was full of a wailing, mingling sound of foreign tongues which put their own southern dialect to sleep. A spare built, one-lunged mother had gotten her flock about her after leaving the train. They stood hitching and gazing about nervously, when a Mormon elder shouted up through the immigrant car window, "Here they are, Brother Barrieman."

The limping father for the first time, hugged, kissed and cuddled his own dear ones in the land of freedom.

W. H. Miller, the mine superintendent, and James Tisdale, one of the mine officials, stood near the two boys, when Tisdale spoke: "What does this flood of immigration mean, Miller? Does it mean Mormon propaganda to strengthen Brigham Young's band, so that his Mormon church may rule the territory of Utah, or does it mean that these wilds are to reach a stage of civilization through this foreign element that know nothing or little of the principle of our own form of free government?"

"Jim, these families mean that we along the railroad here have already reached civilization, and that means the outskirts back from the railroads are to follow. These incoming cattle, horse and sheep men will civilize this country before we hardly know how it happened."

The two men walked away with the crowd leaving the two young illiterates alone. Charley turned with a serious, sober face and said, "We on the ranches are not civilized yet, it seems, according to that feller's way of thinkin', are we?"

"No," said Billy. "Nor I don't want ter be if it takes them kind ter do it," he said, as he pointed to the immigrants.

"Billy, what does civilization mean, anyhow?"

"Well," answered Billy, "I thought I knowed but I reckon I don't, for I ast Jim King one time what it was, an' he said it was the time after a new country got so well settled up that the big fish swallowed up all the little ones. I reckon he meant big ranches instead of fish, though."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Charley. "I wish I knowed all about books an' writin' things. I'd tell my mother about a lot o' things that she never knowed nothin' about."

"I'll betcha wouldn't tell her 'bout what we're up against out here ter keep from bein' led off on the wrong trail," said Billy.

"I dunno why, Billy?"

"Cause if your mother knowed how hard it was fur us boys ter keep out o' devilment, such as the stealin' an' hold-up business, where they're nearly all at it, she'd go crazy afore breakfast, Charley. Nobody gives a boy any credit fur havin' a backbone, nohow. Our mothers always thinks they have ter keep on raisin' us up til we've got beards afore they quit frettin' 'bout us. Let's set down on the platform. I'm gittin' tired an' the show is all over now, anyhow."

"Well, Billy, I dunno how I'd of stood it if it wasn't fur thinkin' 'bout my mother. She's always bin scared half to death for fear I'd take off after the neighborhood rowdies, just cause I happened to be a live one, and git into trouble like all the other boys afore I left home. Now I reckon it's as you say, if she knew that Troy Sampson, George Fadens, Jack Bennett, Elkmans and that gang of stage coach and train robbers was doin' their darndest ter git me to jine with them, just cause I happened ter be a good shot and backed up what I stood for. They allowed I could git rich at one haul instead o' punchin' cows for uncle by the month. Yes, I spect she'd doubt my havin' the backbone to stick to the slow and sure way to git a start."

Charley Sparks had a longer story to tell Billy, but he saw

his Uncle Sam motioning for him to come on, as he was ready to pull out for the ranch.

Billy pondered over the situation. He had believed as had S. I. Fields and W. H. Miller that civilization had come, along with the passing of the Galt gang and other horse thieves, Nigger Ned's disappearance and hundreds of other undesirables.

The Bob Davis Montana road agents had sought richer fields.

The towns along the railroad had built many fine, permanent buildings, filled with merchandise from cellar to roof. A school-house had been built in Rock Springs. The coal mines were putting out black fuel by the thousands of tons. Four- and six-horse teams would soon be pulling out of the town with immense loads of ranch supplies. Some of these supplies reached family homes as much as a hundred or more miles from town.

These facts were enough to make Billy suspect that civilization had arrived. There was still further evidence of that fact, but Billy's mind was like that of his friend, Charley Sparks. It was as uncultivated as the country they had adopted. It took time for these indications of this great change from outlawry to civilization to appear. Although they would hardly realize it, this change, as yet unexperienced by them, had to come when the country was fully settled up. But, on reflection, Billy comprehended that horses, cattle and bleating flocks would soon be on every hill.

This live, young Ozark, experienced student, Billy Buck, was more than puzzled, he was rattled with tongue-tied reasoning. He knew much of the almost unobtainable, out-of-the-ordinary facts, and nothing of the future. He had observed the disappearance of the pony thieves and gunmen, which he believed to be the principal ills of nature's mountainous, time-given gifts he loved so well.

The abandonment of Mexican Joe's outlaw rendezvous in Brown's Hole, which seemed to him the last button on the outlaw's coat, looked to him like the end of thieving dens. But alas! Another evil had sprung up in the same place. In this out-of-the-way old den had gathered many men of questionable

character, for a temporary breathing spell. This chosen spot for crime incubation, hatching, and concealment of person and plunder, extended for miles around its well known hub.

Brown's Hole, itself, is a pleasant, scenic place to live in winter, being a deep little valley on the Green river, some five by fifteen miles in size. It is box-canyoned above and below, and surrounded by rough, craggy-peaked mountains, which tower some two to three thousand feet above the river. It was practically safe from civil or military interference. Wanted absconders could slumber here in peace, while winter's chilly blasts piled the white robe of snow to an almost impassable depth outside.

During these restful, snow-bound periods these outlaws discussed the necessity of recruiting their depleted ranks. Their recruits usually had to come from the inexperienced, young men, or boys, who had energy, nerve and push, and were ambitious to get something of their own.

Charley Sparks had become a daring rider, good roper and was a fine shot, and he also had plenty of nerve, which was just the kind of man they needed. He was approached through such men as Troy Sampson, George Fodens, and finally Jack Elkmains himself went to him with a proposition to join their gang in holding up and robbing mail and express trains. Jack painted their life and profession in glowing colors, and the prospect of big and easy money, which was enough to tempt any boy without a full-grown backbone. Charley's early training, and thoughts of mother and home, stiffened his spine and aroused the inbred spark of duty and conscience enabled him to say "no."

Jack Elkmains later, when working for the Middlesix Cattle Company, killed a man. He received fifteen hundred tainted dollars and was made foreman. This manner of winning a big salary, had a reacting effect among that noble class of manly men called cowboys. So Jack went up to the Blackfoot country in Idaho, and got into the same kind of trouble, which ended his career.

Billy Buck played in the mud around this pond of temptation

that Charley Sparks shied at. The boy that could withstand those early day kid-traps was only one boy out of thousands. They had to be bred, born, and fitted for it or they were lost boys. Billy had seen this Brown's Hole locality grow into disrepute, and shed its once maiden name and characteristic reputation. Though again to become the center of crime, the daring, courageous pony thieves, who stole, ran, and fought for their lives, had been replaced, by events, by the more cowardly, loop-whirling, maverick seekers.

This exchange of thieves was bad for the country; they were a hundred times more numerous than the pony thieves had been. They were to be found in many cow camps. The original foundation of the cow thieves came from the importation of cattle, mostly from Texas, where the man had, perhaps, learned his trade as had Nigger Ned Huddleston, mavericking for his boss in order to hold his job.

The mountain natives, knowing nothing about the law, but skilled in the art of self-preservation, short on obedience and long on self-accumulated ideas, raised the Texans one better, and went to stealing for themselves.

Maverick branding, like all other bad habits, grew in a quiet way, until several deep snows had come and gone. Townspeople knew but little about the rustling business, consequently they had but little to say about disloyalty. So the new stage of civilization seemed to be running in perfect order, when, in reality, lawlessness among the riders on the different ranches was increasing daily, though quietly. They soon learned who was who among themselves, and stood together in small local groups, as one man, when it came to a contest with some big cattle company, whom the rustlers blamed for starting the game.

The man in the saddle claimed he had as much right to use a maverick loop for profit as the ranch kings had to maverick Uncle Sam's public domain with a political snarl. Let this be as it may, the battle was on between two classes of greedy, non-American sharks. This war to get something for nothing was hampering the real American standard of civilization. The

lack of law enforcement cultivated this feudal strife until, like all other cases arising from lack of law enforcement, it had to be handled without gloves by the people themselves, who were not hog tied with the vote-getting strings, as many officials were. This was no easy task. Evidence of guilt had to be so strong that one could almost smell burning hair, and hear the maverick bawl in the courtroom, or the accused went free. The cattle kings were too powerful a necessity in campaign times to be considered guilty of anything wrong, so there lay that grand, wealth-and-health-giving country helplessly gasping for law and order, which had to come before civilization could become a reality.

This game of "grab and hang on" lasted until fuzzy lips sported moustaches. The saddle ring was still burning the brand of ownership in secluded nooks on the cattle range. The kings of big ranches had concluded to use, by proxy, bullets for balance-weights of power. They filled the infested localities with paid gunmen who were to seek evidence against the cattle rustlers, and give them notice to quit the range, or pay the penalty.

During the lapse of time, while the youngsters were growing up among the ranch families to take sides with the feudal cowmen, some of the absconding ones returned. Among them was Nigger Ned Huddleston, who now went under the name of Isom Dart. He only had one ear; and claimed that the left ear had been bitten off in a fight with another negro down south.

Nat Rasper was now heard of as a cow-puncher for the Middlesix Cattle Company.

When Clouse Caseburg parted company with Isom Dart in the Trinidad country, Colorado, he carried away with him an changeable mental picture. The circling turkey buzzards above the glimmer of the heated sands, the swaying, bobbing blink of the upturned bottle, corked with the crown of an upright growing shrub, had attracted their attention. This signal of distress contained the unfortunate girl's story of Nat Rasper's desertion, while she was sick with the smallpox. This secret was burning holes in the breast of him who had tried to help

the helpless. This scene was but a part of the memorable picture. Scattered about on the ground were ragged pieces of men's clothing, which were undoubtedly the very garments that Mincy had worn when last seen. These were lying near the skeleton form of the girl whom Nat Rasper had beguiled from her school. But a few minutes before, the bareheaded vultures had been seen, hopping about with half-spread wings, tearing the remaining vitals from her whom they had been trying to save.

It had taken this reformed drunkard and loungeur, with the instinct of a bloodhound for the trail, and the tenacity of a bulldog, to run down Nat Rasper. Clouse Caseburg, under the alias, C. C., had overtaken his object of revenge after many a tiresome day's journey, since he had left the skeleton form, the human bones and the scattered clothing to bleach on the sandy hills of Oklahoma. C. C. knew Nat Rasper's whereabouts and bided his time.

Jack Bennett and his young pal, Pigeon, had done their time with free board, in Arkansas, and now appeared among friends in the Brown's Hole country. Jack Bennett organized a hold-up gang and made a bold attempt to rob a stage coach, which was supposed to have the yellow product of the mines from up north. He was a little short on funds, and was in a hurry to acquire some easy money, so he got the men for the job as quickly as possible. In doing so, he left Pigeon out of the deal.

Bennett did not know, as yet, what had become of Nat Rasper or the Indian girl, Mincy. But she had not been taken to the place where she was to have been left, and one of the Bosset girls had told him that Pigeon had told her that he, Pigeon, had an educated Indian girl who had all the white girls skinned a mile. Bennett knew that Rasper was done with the girl, and surmised that Pigeon had told her so the time he took her from her boarding place. He believed that Nat had deceived him and left the girl at some other place for Pigeon, who was a good looking young man, and spoke the girl's own tongue, so it didn't look to be a hard matter for the girl to take up with Pigeon.

Jack Bennett shot his misguided conclusions at Pigeon, and said that Nat and he had stolen his prospect for a camp cook. Pigeon declared his innocence, called Bennett a fool and asked him how there could be anything in his fool idea when he had been in the pen all the time with him, and could not possibly know any more about what become of Nat and the girl than, he, himself, did. Bennett abused the youngster and would have killed him if other men had not interfered. The row was settled for the time and Pigeon joined the crowd, and the job was pulled off under Jack Bennett's leadership.

This outbreak of Bennett's was about as successful, in a financial way, as his robbery of Clouse Caseburg down in Oklahoma, where about sixty dollars in pocket money was the net result in cash. The man who was to do the shooting, if necessary, in this stage hold-up, shot a horse when the driver applied the whip. The coach upset, but the heavy sacks of yellow dust which Bennett had expected to find on this coach had mysteriously found their way out to the railroad ahead of Jack's hold-up.

This job didn't seem to create much excitement at the time. Later a storm of wrath broke loose around the Brown's Hole rendezvous, which caused every one to flee, except those who were apparently innocent and they stayed where they were. Hundreds of armed men galloped about over the country, aiming to round up the whole gang of outlaws, and pass snap judgment sentences of death on all individuals who were known to be guilty. Nobody thought of law but every man's hand was on his gun.

Just how many outlaws floated down through the great Lladore canyon in the northwest corner of Colorado, or how many were shot or hung in secluded jungles of the roughest, rockiest country known to the writer, no man will ever know.

Automatically, with the minds of these determined men, Jack Bennett was captured and rushed to the scene of silence, where he gulped his last breath of oxygen. The knot was tied, the rope pulled taut, and the lifeless form of another outlaw swung from the crosspiece over a high gate in front of the Bosset



ranch house, in the lower end of Brown's Hole. This swinging pendulum of humanity emblematically testified to the fact that outlawry must give way to civilization.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE DEATH OF NAT RASPER



CONTRARY to the characteristic custom of most mountain criminals, Pigeon squealed on his gang. He joined the posse of citizens and helped to run down the hold-up gang. He even helped capture and hang his own partner in crime. He said if they had not hanged Jack Bennett, that Bennett would have killed every one of the posse whom he could identify as belonging to the uprisers out to round up the hold-ups. Pigeon was impressed with the idea that he was immune from all danger of justice ever overtaking him, so he never left the locality, as many others did.

This uprising did not affect either Isom Dart or Nat Rasper. Caseburg never had been an outlaw and his new alias, C. C., was unnecessary. He used it only to serve his purpose in seeing that Nat Rasper received his just deserts. Isom Dart and Clouse Caseburg still appeared as perfect strangers.

The fact that justice overtakes all wrongdoers, sooner or later, let happen what will, was demonstrated over in Clay Basin, some fifty miles south of Rock Springs, and but a few miles from the old Jessie Ewing copper mine claim. Pigeon had revived some of his old-time spirit of dare-and-do business by bearing down on Ike Randle, for condemning Jack Elkmains for one of his criminal acts; and tried, with threatening language, to drive Randle out of camp. Ike whirled like a flash, the gun roared, and Pigeon fell crumpled in the sagebrush. Pigeon caught the bullet in his mouth, and both teeth and life were extracted at the same instant.

After Jack Elkmains had killed his man, for a price, and was made foreman on the Middlesix Cattle Ranch, he fled to Brown's Hole for safety.

Nat Rasper, who was punching cows for the Middlesix people,

now changed localities. He went to Tim Kinney's ranch, where he worked the first six months as a rider. Kinney believed Nat to be a good cowman, so he made him foreman of the ranch. After he had been with Kinney a year and six months, Kinney realized that his judgment of Nat Rasper's ability to handle cattle had been verified beyond all doubt. But Kinney got a hunch that all was not well, and fired Nat Rasper.

Nat rounded up the four prolific cows he had bought that fall, along with their one year's increase. He moved his little herd down to Brown's Hole. In doing so, he had to pass through Bosset's gate, where Jack Bennett was hung for outlawry. There happened to be several neighbor men there at the time, and among them were Isom Dart and Charley Sparks.

Rasper's herd counted out seventy-one head, and not all of the increase were calves. It seemed that some of Nat's four cows had given birth to full-grown yearlings, as there were several of that age in the herd. Nobody made any complimentary remarks about Rasper's judgment in selecting prolific cows, but sly winks and grins went the rounds. There were nearly seventeen calves, and some of them yearlings, to each cow at one birth, according to the size of Nat's herd, which was considered going a little strong.

Isom Dart, who stood near Nat as the cattle passed through the gate into the Hole, or Park, as it was now called, murmured to Rasper: "Yo' sho' hit 'em hard fo' de fust yeah, Mistah Nat."

At this, Nat tipped off Charley Sparks, who happened to be passing at the time, and who sat on his horse on the other side of the fence, apparently counting the cattle and watching for brands.

"He come here dead broke and is a rich man now," said Nat, designating Sparks. "They all do it, Isom. Better buy a few cows and start in to get something while the getting is good."

Isom rode away from the Bosset ranch, fully decided that he had wasted his time while working by the month, which he had been doing ever since he had arrived in the region of Brown's Hole. He had worked first on the Two Bar Ranch, then on the

Spicer Ranch, and from there he had gone to the Hay Brothers.

It was while he was with the Hay Brothers that he broke his pledge to Billy Buck, whom he had promised that he would stop stealing and be a better negro. But Nat Rasper's success was too much for his kleptomaniacal tendencies. Isom Dart fell for the temptation. No maverick escaped his loop, and the DI brand, which meant Isom Dart, after that. He held his job with the Hay Brothers until there were quite a few DI cattle scattered through the country. No one, except a few cronies of Isom's, knew to whom the DI brand belonged until Lon Fisher, the foreman of the round-up, grew suspicious of wrong doing, and ran out one of the DI cows and sold her to the highest bidder, which was the custom then with all mavericks on the round-up.

Isom came out in the open and claimed his brand, and started on his own hook, with Con Dresher as a partner, with his headquarters at Summit Springs on Cold Springs Mountain.

Nat Rasper had left Bosset's ranch, where he had been living for a time, and was now located at Cold Springs on the mountain. This mountain was an adjunct to the old nest in Brown's Hole and relieved it of much of its bad reputation.

Billy Buck, who had left the west slope in search of a schoolhouse with a different environment, amidst the tall corn east of the Big River, became restless. Longing to be amongst big game once more, he returned for a spell of recreation. While searching for signs of bears on the Wickyup mountain, adjacent to the Cold Springs mountain, he saw a lone rider sheer off in order to keep from meeting him. But as he saw Billy gallop toward him, he returned and they met.

"The Lawd's sakes alive, Mistah Billy, whah yo' drop from! De sky? I nevah expected ter see yo' face agin. Whah yo' headin' fo,' Mistah Billy?"

"Bear signs," said Billy.

"Ba'h!" exclaimed Isom. "None roun' heah wo'th speakin' 'bout, Billy."

"Well, how are yer comin' on, Ned?"

Isom threw up his hands and unconsciously glanced around.

"Fo' Gawd's sake, Mistah Billy, nevah use dat word Ned agin. It's Isom Dart every day in the yeah, now, Billy."

"All right, Isom. I'll never give yer away if yer act half-way decent."

"I knowed dat, Billy, evah since I been big enuff ter face ol' Massa Huddleston's whippin' post down amongst de Ozark flint rocks." Isom turned his horse, saying, "Yo' come right along, yo' is goin' ter stop over this ve'y night wid mah; da's no bugs in my blankets, Billy. An' de Lawd knows yo' will nevah eat a mo' welcome meal than de one I'se goin' ter set befo' yo,' Billy."

Billy spurred up alongside of his old friend: "Say, Isom, there are two questions I want ter ask yer; they have bothered me long enough. Why did you, a strong, muscular man over six feet, allow old Jessy Ewing, and those other fellers, ter beat yer up? And let Old Jessy turn yer into a table that time up in the jail at South Pass? And what made yer run up at Pacific Springs, when the Indians were shooting at the antelope?"

"Don't yo' know, Mistah Billy? If I had o' beat dat ol' Jessy man up like he needed, I sho' would of been shot or hung, fo' no black man aftah he has been called a bad nigger dares beat up a white man; he nevah lives long aftah dat, Mistah Billy. An' when dem tame Indians an' you all got to shootin' so fast, I was kind o' half dreamin' 'bout de bloody scalps an' jest lose mah head afo' I knowed it, jest like I did at dem Diamond fields. An' dat's de Gawd's truff, Billy."

"I guess yer have told it right, Isom," said Billy Buck.

It was in this little side camp that Billy got the history of Isom's trail from the time he left Green River, years before, up to the present meeting. When Isom touched on Nat's remark about everybody stealing, and drew his attention to Charley Sparks, Billy told him that Nat was a d—liar and was trying to get him to fall in and strengthen his hand just as other outlaws had done with both he and Charley Sparks.

Billy looked Isom square in the eye, and told him that he never had lied to him and never expected to, for it was a losing

game anyhow, and if he wanted to know how Charley Sparks had become one of the richest men in that country, without stealing cattle, he could tell him, for Charley's life was as open a book to him as Isom's was.

"Charley Sparks never forgot the time when he was a tender-foot boy that I got off my horse an' climbed up behind Jimmy Reed, lettin' 'im have my pony ter hunt his uncle's team with. So I can tell yer the facts 'bout Charley's gettin' rich."

"Yo' see, Mistah Billy, I knowed 'bout dat hoss business, fo' dat Jimmy Reed tol' me 'bout yo' bein' good ter dat boy when I cooks fo' dem bone huntahs; yes, he did, Billy. An' I wants ter know, Mistah Billy, fo' mebbe I kin git rich de same way Sparks did."

"It's a fact, Isom, that Charley Sparks came to this country dead broke, and in debt fur the price o' his ticket, and worked fur his uncle, at first, fur twenty-five dollars a month, to pay it back. He was so darned green then, his uncle was 'fraid the cows might eat 'im up, and twenty-five dollars was all the wages he got at first. He then took up a ranch over on South Fork, below Antone's place, bought a few cattle when they were high and sold 'em when they were cheap. He sold the ranch fur two hundred dollars, and bought one hundred and twenty-seven head o' sheep. These sheep and his saddle horse was all o' his worldly possessions at that time. He run these sheep, with Willis Roofs lookin' after the whole bunch and payin' one-third o' the expenses. When he had nine hundred he went it alone, and they soon increased ter three thousand head. Living practically off o' his gun, his increase was all profit. He mortgaged this herd and bought another, as prices was low then. They was much higher the followin' year and his wool and lambs paid off the mortgage. His profits were large fur prices remained high fur a time, and he kept puttin' his profits back in sheep. He began to buy out his neighbors up and down South Fork, until he owned all the ranches on the creek with their water rights.

"The stick-and-stay tenacity, which brought Clouse Caseburg back ter this country, is what made this Sparks ranch what it

is. Two hundred and fifty tons o' hay are cut where twenty tons once grew, besides all o' the grain and fruit, and the finest ranch buildings in the country, with many sub-ranches and sheep by the thousand, as well as horses and cattle. Now what Charley Sparks has done, others could have done. Rasper and his kind chose ter steal from those who labored that they mought earn an honest dollar.

"Now, Isom think o' greenhorn kid, with nothin' but health, pep and push, and a determination to make good, comin' here as he did, and helpin' ter build up this country. Then that miserable whelp, Nat Rasper, and his gangster, try ter poison yer mind, and the minds o' every young boy they meet. It's bad enough ter the innocent, as them outlaws have been doin'."

"Nat Rasper is no friend of yours, Isom," continued Billy. "No! When he encourages yer in quittin' your safe and sane job ter go ter stealin', he proves himself your worst enemy, ready ter see yer hung, or shot like a dog, fur that's sure comin' if yer foller his footsteps. Don't forgit I said so, Isom. I'm not preachin' ter make yer think I'm an angel, fur I'm not. I have done wrong by the yard, but I know better now. I know the difference between carryin' around a six-shooter in one hand, grabbin' at all trouble in sight with the other, and floatin' through life with a light heart and a contented mind, with no dread o' the men I meet."

Ned hung his head like a guilty kid; he knew he was guilty. Billy sympathized with his black, childhood playmate. No one knew better than he that the negro was raised to believe that the lash was necessary to get an honest day's work done. When it was done, it was done for another. Stealing was no crime among his kind, for it was necessary to obtain a melon, or any other luxuries, so dear to their depressed, hungry hearts. Ned admitted sorrowfully that he had slipped and had returned to the saddle and the maverick loop. But, away from good influence, Ned went wrong easily because of his weak make-up.

Ned rode away from this private, outlaw camp, both glad and sorry that he had met the man who had tried hard to do the impossible for him.

Isom was soon in his own headquarters at Summit Springs, looking after his DI stealings. Nat Rasper, Isom, and their associates, soon attracted the attention of the big cattle men, whose cows were furnishing the mavericks and dimly branded cattle that kept the two outlaws in material for the big herd which they expected to accumulate by theft.

Tom Horn was said to have been employed by the cattle men's association at five hundred dollars per head for each cattle rustling man killed. Horn was supposed to gather positive evidence of each man's guilt, and then notify him that if he remained in the country it was at his own peril.

Horn appeared, under an assumed name, in the vicinity of Rock Springs, Wyoming, and the surrounding country, about April the first. He was to check up on the cattle rustlers of Brown's Hole and that region. He boarded at E. H. Rife's ranch for a time, concealing his identity and business, and picked up what information he could from the different people who came and went from the ranch.

From there, with a saddle horse and two mules, he went down to Brown's Park. He was soon in with Nat Rasper hand and glove. They worked together, and, during this time, Horn learned that while Nat and Isom were close associates, and had frequent quarrels, nothing serious as yet had ever resulted from their petty differences.

During the time that Horn and Nat were associated together, Isom butchered one of Sam Spicer's bulls in Isom's corral, when he saw Tom Horn, Billy Bragg and Nat Rasper riding up in the distance. Isom grabbed his gun and laid down on the ground. While Horn advanced, Nat Rasper and Bragg, who had ridden around under the hill, joined Horn. The three then rode up to the corral.

"Now, you have played hell stealing Spicer's bull," said Nat Rasper. "You'll have a hard time squaring yourself. Why don't you stop stealing and be an honest nigger. I haven't snared a maverick for eighteen months."

"No," said Isom, "an' I nevah left no sick gal on de desert to starve to death neithah, Mistah Sma'ty."



This started a real war of words, and many secrets were unfolded while others were present. Isom wanted to know about the five hundred V. D. cattle Nat had stolen and sold, and only given him eighty dollars for all his help in the job.

After the row was over, Horn turned to Nat and said: "You made the mistake of your life not to kill that nigger when you had a chance; he will get you yet."

Nat was unsuspecting of his real purpose for being there so Horn stayed until June the 20th. He then went to the Two Bar Ranch, on Snake River, and finally he disappeared, only to return later to Cold Springs on July the 7th, where he shot Nat Rasper, who had ignored his notice to quit the country.

Rasper's body lay undiscovered for some time after he was killed. It was in a putrefactive state when found by William Rife and Felix Myers, who were passing the cabin. Felix, thinking to startle Nat, slipped up to the door, swung his hat, and gave a shout. He saw the blood on the floor and the silent form lying across the bed. Felix was dumbfounded until Uncle Billy Rife appeared at the door. On examination, it was discovered that Nat had been shot three times, with a thirty-thirty caliber rifle, once in the back, through the hip and through the breast bone. The murderer, presumably to avert suspicion, had taken out his watch and placed it on the bed. His purse, containing twenty dollars in gold and two in silver, had been stuffed between the logs over his head. A blood stained notebook, to give the idea of suicide, and to deepen the mystery.

After discovering the murder, Felix told Larry Curtain, who notified Charley Sparks, who later gathered up a few men and went to the cabin, where they held an inquest. They buried Nat's body near where he had paid the penalty of death for his part in retarding civilization by his persistent outlaw life.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SUMMIT SPRINGS TRAGEDY



OME time after the killing of Nat Rasper, one of Spark's Mexican sheep-herders, in passing Pigeon's grave over in Clay Basin, noticed signs of fresh dirt around. Thinking that coyotes, or some other animals, had been digging there, he started to pass on, but, on reflection, he turned around; he saw that there were fresh signs all around, and that more rocks were piled around than when he had last noticed the grave. As he turned to leave he picked up what, at first, he thought to be just an envelope. But it turned out that it contained the picture of a finely dressed, beautiful, young Indian girl.

After the Mexican reached his camp, he displayed his find, and every one wanted the picture. The camp mover offered the Mexican fifty cents for the picture, and got it. Caseburg, alias C. C., who happened to be there at the time, offered the camp mover more for the card. He said he wanted to keep it and palm it off on the boys as his sweetheart's picture, but he finally let C. C. have it for three silver dollars, and he would not sell it for less.

On hearing this matter discussed at the home ranch, Charley Sparks began connecting this exorbitant price for the picture with other strange things he had seen and heard about this quiet, unassuming man. He remembered the strange actions of C. C. at Nat Rasper's burial; also what he had heard about the quarrel of Jack Bennett with Pigeon, and what one of the Bosset girls was reported to have told Bennett about Pigeon having an educated Indian girl. These things set him to thinking.

Sparks knew nothing about either Isom's, Nat Rasper's, or C. C.'s past lives, but he knew that C. C. had a tense hatred for

Nat Rasper. He also had noticed, as had others who were present at Nat's burial, that C. C. had sat apart from the rest, silent and preoccupied, taking no part in the proceedings. Sparks made up his mind that C. C. was brooding over something more serious to him than the funeral of an outlaw. Two and two make four, he thought, so he visited Rasper's grave. A close examination revealed the fact that it had also been tampered with. Having no positive proof of "who was who," or why, nothing was said by this observer.

Did C. C. have anything to do with the shooting or the killing of Nat Rasper? This was the question in the minds of those who were suspicious of every newcomer, for he might be a spotter for the Cattlemen's Association outside, who were trying, in every way, to get rid of the cattle rustlers. In the presence of others, C. C. seemed never to have known anything about Nat Rasper or Isom Dart, previous to their appearance in the Brown's Hole country, although C. C. and Isom had been seen, at long range, holding regular cowboy, sagebrush consultations on horseback. And yet, at the same time, neither of them had ever quoted anything that the other had said.

Charley Sparks brooded over these puzzling facts, which he felt sure meant more than he had yet learned. His frenzical bump of inquisitiveness kept him everlastingly at C. C. trying to pull something out of his secretive store of knowledge concerning Nat Rasper. Not until long after it had all happened did C. C. ever use Nat's name.

C. C. came along where Sparks was watching a gang of men erecting his telephone line from Rock Springs to Brown's Park, via his South Fork ranch.

"Anybody at the store down at the ranch, Charley?" asked C. C. "I want some tobacco and other things."

"Yes," said Sparks. "Hold on a minute and I will go down with you."

"How long will this line be? It will cost something over this rough country, won't it?" asked C. C. as they rode along.

"About one hundred and fifteen miles, and it will cost about \$108.00 dollars per mile," answered Charley.

On arrival at the store, C. C. made his purchases and remarked, "Quite a stock to be so far from a town."

"Yes, about \$15,000.00 dollars worth of stock. You see our different ranches use lots of supplies, and we sell a little outside, especially as there is no store in the Park. Have you ever seen my modern shearing and dipping plants?"

"No," answered C. C.

"Come on and look them over while you are here."

C. C. looked over the immense sheep corrals and barn, with room for five thousand sheep, where three thousand sheep were dipped in a day. There were stalls for thirty hand shearers, that clipped their hundred sheep a day to the man, and where the wool was sorted into fine, half-blood, three-eighths, one-quarter, low-quarter and braid, then baled for shipment.

"We put the black wool by itself. You see, we have about one black sheep to every hundred head of white ones. This helps the herders to check up on the number of his sheep in the herd in case of a loss. If one black sheep is gone, there might be a hundred, and so on. We don't round up and bed the herd near the sheep wagon, as we used to do; the sheep are left wherever they happen to be at night.

"About how many sheep do you run in a herd?" asked C. C., who seemed to be very much interested in how this big ranch was run.

"Oh, about twenty-five hundred in summer, and three thousand or so in winter," answered Sparks.

"What kind of a newfangled dipping concern is this?" asked C. C.

"That's a special dipping plant (Australian method). Two hundred head are run in there at a time. After shearing and spraying them with a coal tar preparation, called cursoleum, which kills the scab, mites and sheep ticks, we run them on the lambing grounds. When lambing starts it takes four or five men to the herd to look after each herd until lambing is over," said Charley Sparks.

"It's a good thing you went into the sheep business instead of cattle," said C. C.

"I did try cattle," said Sparks. "But the boys were too fast for me in that business. Such men as Nat Rasper soon learned me that I was no judge of breeding cows," laughingly remarked Sparks.

C. C. never mellowed up to Charley's attempt to draw him out on that subject, as he had hoped he would.

There are a few around here who were at first inclined to think Isom Dart killed Nat Rasper, but I never thought so. What did you think about that, C. C.?"

"I never thought at all," said C. C., "for I knew Isom never did it."

"Well," said Charley, "I guess Nat needed killing all right, from what I have seen and heard, don't you?"

C. C. sat silent for a moment, then faced Sparks with a doggish, set expression, and said: "It would have been a God's blessing to the world if that man, Rasper, had died in the shell before he ever peeped, Mr. Sparks. He was a far meaner, cold-blooded man than you will ever know, Charley."

Wishing to continue the conversation along the same line, Charley said: "Well, we both have a reminder that Nat will commit no more crimes on this earth, anyway."

"I'm sure," said C. C. "that every time I fill my pipe I will be reminded that he will never again commit another as dastardly a crime as I know of him committing," said C. C., as he slid off the drainage platform.

Seeing that C. C. was getting uneasy, and was ready to go, Sparks faced him and said: "C. C., it is not from just idle, curiosity that I ask, but to put myself right in my earnest surmising. Was that your picture card which you paid my camp mover three dollars for?"

"It was," said C. C., "and since you have heard the gossip, I will say I lost the card and that fellow found it. I was bound to have it. That young, foolish girl was once in my care, to be educated in the ways of civilization. She was to be schooled on another man's money, to partially atone for his own wrong

doing; not that he ever wronged the girl, no! He was her friend with heart and purse. The girl is as silent today as Nat Rasper himself, who led her to a dismal death."

"I thank you, C. C. I understand you and your heart and mine is with you."

C. C. glanced about at the modern plant as they walked away.

"Say, Charley, if all the murderers and cow thieves had done as you have for this barren country, we would be living in the midst of civilization long before this. I'm more than paid for my time; it's been a relief to have you show me around. It takes my mind off of cow stealing, murders and the wild gossip that floats from camp to camp, about spies and gumshoe men, which the rustlers claim the big cattlemen are sending into the country to kill the small fry off at so much per head. I think I will go myself, since bullets have broken the camel's back by cleaning house in the Park."

"Come again, C. C. Come any time, and make yourself at home in the bunk house and at the mess table."

Charley Sparks was now satisfied, in his own mind, that C. C.'s sole purpose in that community had been to keep checked up on Nat Rasper's whereabouts. He did not doubt but that he knew of Tom Horn's purpose in that vicinity, and perhaps he had been trying to save Isom Dart from the bullet, by having him give up his "maverick business" for a more safe and sane occupation.

Alas! Billy Buck, who, from childhood, had held the key to this kleptomaniac's weakness, had given up all hopes, and had pronounced Isom Dart a doomed man, long before the fatal day came. Isom Dart had many qualifications necessary to make a good cowman. But he had been disqualified as a real cowboy before he ever saw daylight. He had been cursed, the same as the wealthy shoplifter, before his birth. This put him in the class I am telling you about, which retarded civilization in these local spots of the west.

Don't mix these thieves and cutthroats with the old-time cowboys. No, never! The mass of cowboys were among the biggest, most broadminded, whole-souled class of men with whom

I ever had anything to do. They have no place in this story only as good citizens. I mention them only as an illustration, or to defend them against the stories of some pie-eating word artist, who never saw a man go to bed like a chicken, with his spurs on.

Nothing that I have said, or may say, in these pages, should be construed to mean malice or harm in any way to any person. I am only trying to give the reader an idea of the way things were done on the outskirts, in reducing this "wild-west business" to a stage of civilization.

These out-of-the-ordinary, unusual happenings I am telling you about had nothing to do with the average citizens of the new west. These were performed by the clinkers of animalism, after the spirit of humanity had been burned out of them by the devil's own fire. They performed out of reach of the law and could only be reached by another act of lawlessness. So bullets were used by the unseen hand of another, who was an even greater criminal than the thieves themselves. But alas! Justice awaited them all.

After killing Nat Rasper, according to these sleuths, Tom Horn went to a neighboring ranch, where he tried, in different ways, to mislead people so that they would not suspect him. He claimed Nat Rasper as a particular friend of his, and he spoke of overhearing many arguments and quarrels between Nat and Isom Dart.

He said that in one instance, he heard a part of one of their quarrels, in which Isom seemed to be accusing Nat of robbing a man, and deserting a girl down in Oklahoma, whereupon Nat had told Isom that if he ever opened his mouth about that on the outside, it would cost him his life. Horn said that Isom met this threat by saying, "If yer beat me to it, Mistah Rasper, you'll have ter go some, mind you dat. Now, I'se not talkin,' only ter youself, an' if yo' dig up trouble it's youah own fault." Horn said that Nat was afraid of Isom, as he was a crazy, rattle-headed crank as well as a quick and sure shot, and that Nat was no gunman himself.

Horn kept harping on the fact that Isom was a dangerous,

bush-whacking negro. He did this, evidently, to divert people's attention from his own guilt, and make them suspicious of Isom Dart. These half-lies and half-truths of Horns' had been partially successful, though many disbelieved him. Some others accused Isom, at first, of killing Rasper, but later on they cleared their minds of this erroneous idea.

After this, Horn went to Rock Springs, and from there to Ogden, Utah; he then returned by rail and left the train at Rawlins, Wyoming. He quietly departed from there to halt at the Two Bar Ranch, on Snake River, Colorado, where he hung up about October the 9th. He then left the Two Bar Ranch. No doubt his mind was on the five hundred dollar roll that he was said to receive for such nightly jaunts. This cold-blooded, daring, experienced frontiersman ascended the O-Wy-Yu-Kuts plateau, a part of which is better known locally as Cold Springs mountain. On reaching the vicinity near Summit Springs, on Cold Springs mountain, he cached his horse in the dense grove of quaking asps, and slipped out later, in the hours of darkness, near the open land to Isom's large pole corral. Here he lay in wait for his doomed victim's appearance.

Daylight came, and no signs of life appeared, with the exception of the smoke which curled from the chimney of the one-room log cabin. There was but one door to the cabin and he faced this. Tom Horn's eagle eye, backed by his iron nerve and a heart apparently as cold as an iceberg, never lost sight of that door until the morning sun had kissed the yellow and purple tints of the aspen foliage that beautified Isom Dart's outlaw cabin home.

At last the heavy door swung open and Isom Dart, trailed by George and Ed Bosset, with Gael Walker close behind, and carrying his bridle on his arm, came out. Isom halted and glanced around. The deadly thirty-thirty rifle cracked. Isom reeled and fell, shot through the heart at a distance of one hundred and fifty yards. There was a clattering of feet, the slamming bang of the heavy, cabin door, and the Bosset boys and Walker were in the cabin, in which was Con Dresher, Isom's partner.



They were afraid to go out through the door and there was no window, so they sawed a log out of the back of the cabin, which abutted on an aspen grove; through this they made their escape. Having lost all interest in their colored friend's hospitality, they took to the craggy rocks and sagebrush jungle for safety.

They hit the trail at a fox trot, which soon landed them in Brown's Hole, where they notified Isom's friends of his death. But they ignored the notice to look after his remains. It was left to Isom's enemies to bury him, which they did, on October the 21st, near the place where he fell. Jose McKnight, a sister to George and Ed Bosset, was present; also Joe Davenport, Bale Herindon, better known as McGinty, and Willis Roueff; also his partner and a few others.

These two deaths from ambush cleared the atmosphere around the outlaw's rendezvous in the Brown's Hole region, followed, as they were, by a notice received by Jim McKnight to quit the mountain, which he obeyed. Others left also and this made things look like the dawn of civilization had appeared on the outskirts, as well as along the railroad.

## CHAPTER XXII

### TOM HORN'S LAST SHOT



HE killing of Nat Rasper, in time, reached Texas, and later on his father came to the scene of murder and dug up the remains for removal. It was observed that three teeth were missing from the skull. Nat had had no teeth missing, but the outlaw Pigeon, who was buried in Clay Basin, had three teeth shot out when he was killed by Ike Randle.

It was then, and not until then, that a silent observer was able to add the sum of his suspicions concerning the fresh dirt at Pigeon's grave and the Indian girl's picture, which C. C. had bought for the enormous price of three dollars. He also remembered that C. C. had remarked to him that not every one could boast of having the skull of a notorious outlaw, to remind him that, sooner or later, justice would overtake all such wrongdoers as Nat Rasper.

Clouse Caseburg had gone to Clay Basin, opened the grave of Pigeon, obtained his skull, then returned to the grave of Nat Rasper and exchanged Pigeon's skull for that of Nat Raspers; thus carrying out his revengeful threat to have his head.

Just what C. C.'s idea was for this exchange of heads was a problem; but it served his purpose when Rasper's remains were removed. This cunning, skillful trick satisfied his revengeful feelings for the present. It also gave him the satisfaction of being reminded in the future that he had got even with Nat for beating him, then committing the crime of seduction and desertion against the Indian girl, who had been placed in C. C.'s care to be educated in the ways of civilization. That bitter, abnormal, revengeful spirit was glued to Caseburg's very soul. He never once faltered in his attempt to see that Nat Rasper met his just deserts, without he, personally, taking his life.

Now that Clouse Caseburg had accomplished his design in that outlying, lawless rendezvous, he disappeared as quietly as he had come, and lived, in that locality.

Tom Horn had disappeared after the murder of Isom Dart, but was now being heard of to the northeast, and was still in the killing business.

Billy Buck and Jim King had met for a reunion after many deep snows had come and gone. They were not the only men in Rock Springs trying to look wise. No! the town was full of them.

A sheep and cattle war was on. The sheep men slipped about the town, with closed lips, as though they had never heard that their sheep-herders had been robbed, beaten, blindfolded and driven out of the country under the penalty of death if they ever returned. After camps, corrals and all personal effects had been destroyed, these faithful shepherds were set adrift, afoot and alone, to mourn the loss of thousands of their flocks, that had been brutally slain or scattered to the four winds in a wild, unsettled locality.

Rock Springs was not only now the great coal center of the west, but was also the rendezvous of many of the sheep kings of the country, who had money, brains and political power to burn; yet still they were helpless. The law could not reach the culprits who had destroyed their property, so other methods were being moulded to fit the case.

Billy and King's long absence from that region had shorn them of most of their old-time friends, and of their unlimited source of knowledge of what was going on in the country. But steaming, gaunt horses, and their sleepy, worn-out riders coming in from the Newfork country to the north, meant news from the seat of war to King and Buck.

The bung was leaking; facts had come down from the Wind River range of mountains near Fremont Peak, some hundred and fifty miles northwest of town. The contest was over Uncle Sam's free grazing lands.

A band of forty or fifty armed, mounted cattle men from the lower tributaries of the Newfork had made a raid up on the

mountains, where many flocks of sheep owned by Rock Springs people had been taken for summer grazing. It was this disgraceful, greedy mob of small cattlemen who had raised havoc among the defenseless flocks.

After having done all the harm they could, to the defenseless shepherds and their flocks, this mob of would-be braves left the mountain for their homes in the valley below. Here they kept quiet, and tried to look as innocent as the sheep owners in Rock Springs, who were laying plans of their own.

More sheep were put back on the mountain as a decoy for a man trap. But the cattlemen never repeated their raid, as was expected. If they had, Wyoming would have had another gruesome episode, similar to that of General Custer's calamity of 1876, to go down in history before civilization became a reality on the outskirts.

While this local sheep and cattle war may seem a tame affair, without the usual literary trimmings and unprintable facts, yet it helps the modern reader to follow the trail from bedlam to civilization; also to understand that countries are not reformed in a day.

The deep snowfall on the mountain drove the decoy flocks to their respective winter ranges. This gave all parties time for thought, and thus this war ended without the use of the "Tom Horn method."

Horn was busy elsewhere. He was working as a so-called stock detective for the big cattle men up north of Laramie City, Wyoming. This Iron mountain neighborhood was composed of squatters, settlers and small cattle ranchers; with large cowmen round about them.

The two elements agreed to disagree. Unlike the Newfork sheep and cattle war, this trouble reached the civil courts, after death and destruction of property became unbearable. It was said that there were more cattle rustlers to the square mile in this district than there were illegal sharps in the District of Columbia. Feuds sprang up among neighbors. Sheep were brought on the scene. Things were happening thick and fast.

Tom Horn, and others also, had been turned loose among the

rustlers and told to get results. They got them. Horn, like Kaiser Bill, believed in terrorism mixed with bullets. He took pains to advertise himself as a killer. He killed and then boasted about it in the presence of those he was trying to subdue. A part of his stock in trade was to frighten his opponents by his personal, forceful and fearless daring; backed by an occasional, fatal shot at the logical moment.

Several killings had been pulled off in this locality. Horn was blamed for the killing of a rustler named Lewis, also one Powell.

Kelse Nickell, a small rancher, who had a band of sheep near one of the big ranches, was shot several times and sent to the hospital to recuperate.

This was laid to Horn, but the people were divided in their opinion as to who did all "this killing." Horn had some good friends in this country—usually among the big cattle men, who stood by Horn to the last knot in the Governor's rope.

Not one of the killers ever invited parties to witness the killing bees. No! it was all done in seclusion; no eye witness was near. If Horn was accused he denied it, and laughingly passed it on.

Horn rode about over the settlement, here tonight and there the next night; perhaps fifty miles between stops. He usually made his home at John C. Cables, one of the big ranchmen.

The thing went from bad to worse, until, finally, one night masked men proceeded to club, kill and destroy the Kelse Nickell herd of sheep.

Kelse Nickell's fourteen-year-old son, Willie, was shot from ambush, near his own home. The rest of the family sold their place and moved away.

The killing of this innocent boy aroused the real western spirit to the fighting pitch. Everybody was looking for extra cartridges, saddling horses, and hitting the trail for facts. Several parties were suspicioned, and two inquests were held.

The evidence indicated one or two of the Miller boys, who had been quarreling with the Nickell family for years. But no evidence sufficient to convict was found.

The pot of human anger boiled without results, until the suspicion that Tom Horn had been the killer of the Nickell boy was confirmed. Horn was trapped by a deputy marshal into making a statement in a room where a court reporter and deputy sheriff were concealed. Horn's arrest followed, and he was locked up in the Cheyenne, Wyoming jail. His trial was set for October the 13th.

Newspaper reporters stepped on Horn with both feet. These wild, red headlines brought people from all over the country to this trial. Billy Buck, King and many others who were interested in the outcome of this wild west gun business, were on hand. Even Clouse Caseburg's eye had caught the red headlines.

Tom Horn was held behind the bars without bail; he was to be tried for murder. This was enough. The courts were to be put to the supreme test. Unlimited money was behind Horn, for any one that would accept it and help free Horn. The best legal talent obtainable set their own price. The unseen hand, supposed to be the big cattle men, was ready to pay the cost.

The question with many was: had civilization appeared in strength sufficient to drive the go-between, bribesters from the courtroom, or was money and political influence still king. Armed citizens mingled with soldiers on every street. It looked like war to the hilt, unless Horn was convicted.

Some of the people were afraid of a jail delivery, others of Horn's escape, which he did accomplish with the help of an automatic gun. However this was of short duration, thanks to the hundreds of armed citizens who believed in law enforcement, and who guarded every street, alley and private by-way in the city. They never let Horn get out of the city. His automatic failed to work, and he was taken back to his cell to give the court a chance to prove its power to stand the political and financial test.

Many leading men, who stood for the killing of rustlers, disapproved of the killing of fourteen-year-old Willie Nickell. The courtroom was crowded with armed, determined men everywhere about the premises all through the trial. Horn was found

guilty in open court, in spite of money, power and legal influence, sentenced to death on October 26th, and hung November 20th for killing Willie Nickell.

"That settles it, Jim," said Billy Buck to King and Caseburg, when they heard the sentence. "Money won't buy everything, or Horn would of got cleared."

"How in Sam Hill can a man as intelligent as Horn have the heart to kill men like we have reason to believe he has been doing? I can't understand it," said Caseburg. "Jim, I can get mad and do just as mean things as any man ever did; but I could not kill a man unless I just had to to save my own life."

"Well, Case," answered Jim King, "I think I can understand how Horn could kill these rustlers with a clear conscience. Billy here has had experience enough that he ought to see it just as I do."

"Yes, Jim, but everybody says he killed these men for a price, with no excuse at all, except that somebody paid him to do it. Now where's the clear conscience comin' in at."

"Well," said King, "being as the thing is all over, I'll tell you and Case that I knew Tom Horn down on the border where it was everybody's business to kill at a price. Raiding bands of Indians, soldiers and Mexicans was the daily occupation along the line between Arizona and Mexico for years. These raids all meant killings by ambush, and at a price. Friendly Indian scouts were paid by the Government, headed by white and Mexican scouts at seventy-five and a hundred dollars a month, according to their ability to skulk and kill. This killing all seemed necessary to the men on the ground.

The Sunday School free ration plan of holding the Apache Indians on a reserve was not in the book. Brass-collared dictators back east were like Caseburg here; they didn't understand that when renegade outlaws were out of reach of both the military and civil law, that killing, or close confinement was the only remedy to civilize a wild country. So these subordinates, on the ground, killed and killed, as the last resort. And they made their reports to fit the case. So there is unwritten history.

"Now, I am not trying to screen Horn," continued King, "for I am utterly opposed to his methods. In the first place, Tom Horn, as a live, courageous, forceful boy, left his Missouri home among the wild game haunts just the same as Billy here did, at an early age. Seeking adventure, he worked his way west, along the frontier between Mexico, Texas and Arizona. He picked up the Mexican and Indian languages, as well as frontier ways, worked for the government herding cavalry horses, and beef cattle for beef contractors. Later on, he lived with peaceable Apache Indians, studied their language and warfare methods. He did this while under U. S. pay, by the consent of a military officer, and became a scout and U. S. interpreter between old Geronimo, high chief of the worst band of Apache Indians known to Mexico, and the United States.

"During these years of Horn's strenuous life on this early-day border, when nothing but a boy, he seldom saw or heard anything except how to scheme, skulk, trail and kill. Kill, kill and how to kill more without getting killed was his early-day training every month in the year for years. His tutors were savage Apache warriors, who had been taught for generations that it was their God-given right, not only to kill Mexican men, but women and children as well, who encroached upon their domain over on the Mexican side. This was long before the U. S. government undertook to clothe and feed this unconquerable band of old Geronimo's hostile Apaches on the American side.

"Uncle Sam's idea of holding these bred-and-born fighting killers on a reservation was impossible. Freedom was dearer to them than life, especially when freedom was just over the line in Mexico. They repeatedly kept breaking away, crossing into Mexico, stealing and murdering, until Gen. Miles had to fire Geronimo and his leaders on a train, and ship them clear out of the country, to stop this continued, annual slaughter.

"Men may draw upon their imagination as they may, but if they are not of the Billy Buck school they can never comprehend the demoralizing effect of the unwritten border history, such as this boy, Tom Horn, was subjected to. He, by custom and



habit, had the idea soaked and baked into his very soul that there was nothing wrong in killing renegade thieves when their depredations couldn't be stopped in any other way.

"Billy Buck here, with some experience of border life on the outskirts, can understand it was not only possible, but likely that Horn believed himself in the right when he killed these renegade rustlers. There was no other way to stop them; you fellows know that," said King.

Billy and Case both admitted that King's summary of Horn's idea of helping to civilize the country might be correct. The three old-timers, who had seen much of the unbelievable facts that occur on the outskirts of civilization, were shaking hands, perhaps for the last time, when Clouse Caseburg said:

"Jim, forget what you heard about that girl, Mincy. There is nothing to it. Every dollar of Ned's money that you gave me, and more too, was used honestly to look after Mincy and old Tickup, her mother. Mincy went as I have told you. Billy here heard Ned's whole story of our Oklahoma life. Ned and I saw her remains and got her penciled note out of the bottle. There can be no mistake, Jim. The country was roadless and wild. She was left without food or water, and too sick to ride even if she had a horse. Billy knew that Nigger Ned Huddleston and the one-eared negro, Isom Dart, were one and the same man. There's nothing to it, Jim. Remember the Bendler stock ranch. Good-by, boys."

The three old-timers, who had helped to make unwritten history, parted for the last time, and their cheeks were moist, although they had promised to visit Caseburg's ranch down in Oklahoma, where civilization was also making its appearance.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### PASSING OF THE WILD WEST



LOUSE CASEBURG left the Brown's Hole country and returned to Oklahoma, where he and Isom Dart had been cotton farming when Nat Rasper had absconded with the schoolgirl, Mincy.

Caseburg had fallen heir to a part of the big stock ranch that had belonged to his half-brother, Bud Bendler, who had been shot and killed by his foreman, Dick Hooten. In this battle over some horses that Hooten had stolen from Bendler, Dick Hooten was brought to justice by Ben Burley, who had been the trusted foreman of Clouse Caseburg, on the cotton farm, before he went to the Bendler ranch as general manager. Ben Burley had held this job ever since Isom Dart and Caseburg had taken up Nat Rasper's trail, to locate the girl Mincy.

On his return from a trip up north, where he had taken some cattle for sale, Ben Burley halted in Oak Center to speak with a villager. He wished to ask him about grass and water in a camping place ahead, which he had learned was near by.

A gleeful shout rang out from a crowd of half-clad children, of all colors and sizes, as they rushed out of a log schoolhouse.

The teacher came forward to where Ben Burley and the Indian were talking. Ben Burley's eyes were fixed upon the poorly clad, young, half-breed teacher. As she glanced at Ben, she shrieked and clasped both hands to her breast.

"What's the matter, Mincy?" said the Indian, as he caught and shook the girl.

"It's Ben Burley!" she exclaimed, half-laughing and half-crying.

Ben sprang to the ground, and took the girl in his strong arms, saying, "Thank God, I was not dreaming. We thought you were dead, Mincy. Caseburg and Isom got your letter

out of that bottle while on your trail. They saw your bones being picked by the buzzards, and recognized the clothes scattered around as yours, so they hurried on after Nat. Caseburg sent a letter back to us by an Indian, telling us all about your death."

Ben turned and gave the Indian a coin, saying, "Send some one to show my men where to camp."

Then turning to his men, Ben said, "Wait in camp for me, boys. I must know all about this matter before I go further."

After Mincy had led Ben Burley to the cabin of the Indian with whom he had just been talking, she turned to him and asked, "Who was that man, Isom, you spoke about, Ben?"

"Isom Dart," said Ben, "was Nigger Ned Huddleston, the tenderfoot nigger that you knew up in Wyoming. It was he who furnished the money to keep your mother, and to send you to school down here. He came down here and picked out the location, before you and your mother ever came here. He lived near here, and kept in touch with Case all the time, though they acted as strangers."

"I thought so," said Mincy. "He was mighty good to us after all that happened, even if he was a black man."

"After your mother had died from the smallpox, while you were in the country, Nat Rasper, Jack Bennett and Pigeon robbed Caseburg and stole his driving team and buggy. Isom came over to your place and found Case tied to his bed in the smokehouse and half-starved to death. It was a few days later when we learned of your flight with Nat. Bud Bendler, a stock rancher up country, from where we lived, was a half-brother to Caseburg, which you knew nothing about. He bought everything Caseburg and Isom had after Case was robbed. This left he and Isom free to follow you and Nat across the country."

"Did they get him?" asked Mincy.

Ben gazed searchingly at the girl as he said, "He's as dead as the logs in this cabin, Mincy."

"Then that is where my letter went," said Mincy. "I put that letter in the bottle when I thought I was going to die there."

By a mere chance, these good people came along, and left a good mother, who had had the smallpox, to care for me. She saved my life but she lost her own." The girl covered her face and sobbed with grief.

Burley turned to the Indian squaw and asked her if the good mother to whom Mincy referred had died with the smallpox.

"No smallpox! Rattlesnake bite my mother right here," she said, placing her finger just below the left ear. "My mother no get smallpox; she have it one time, long ago."

"I was getting well," continued Mincy. "We were going to a water pool that she knew was close by. Her son-in-law here," pointing to the Indian, "left us a pony and clean clothes there to use after we had cleaned up to go home.

"The day we were to leave the sick camp, the good woman was bitten by a snake and died. She had exchanged clothes with me as she could take care of me easier then. I left the poisoned camp, clothes and all. I then went down to the water pool, washed and put on the clean clothes. I was saddling the pony to follow the trail of this man here and his party, when he rode up and asked, 'Where's mother?'

"I told him about the snake killing her so we rode up around my camp. He saw the dead woman and started to ride away. I stopped and pointed at the glistening bottle and said I had better take that bottle down as it might fool some one. I also said that they might take the clothes the good mother had been spreading out when the snake bit her and this would scatter that dread disease all over the country.

"But he said, 'No, no! you mustn't go near that place now, you are cleaned up. Come on, let's get away from here.'

"So we came here, and I have been trying to teach these children to pay them for their loss and for being so good to me."

The girl continued, "I have written every time I got a chance to send it out, but I never heard a word from Case."

"Did you go back to bury the dead woman?" asked Ben.

"Yes," said Mincy, "but not for a long time after we left her."

"Your story explains the whole thing, Mincy!" exclaimed Ben Burley. "Caseburg and Isom must have passed your camp after

the woman that cared for you had died, and got the letter out of the bottle after you left with this man here."

"I know now they did," said Mincy, "for the letter was gone when we went back in the rain to bury her bones. And it couldn't get out of that upturned bottle unless some one took it out."

Ben Burley went about the village and notified all the villagers to meet at the schoolroom. He then talked to the people and explained the situation. He said he was going to take Mincy home with him, and that he wanted to pay them for their trouble and loss in caring for the girl.

"No, never! We are not that kind of people," came as one voice from the crowd. "Neither you nor the girl owes us anything but good will."

After a moment's thought, Ben said, "Send two trusty men with me to my stock ranch that they may know the way. Some of these little children that I see clinging to Mincy may want some milk. I will send you some milch cows by these two men," said Ben.

An old-time, weather-worn, early-day warrior came to the front. With eyes and hands aloft, he howled in prayer to the Great Spirit above for the good man and girl who had hearts like themselves.

Ben Burley glanced around. The kneeling squaws sent his thoughts back to his own kneeling wife, Waneta, who had asked him to break his bottle, throw away his six-shooter, forget the maverick loop, go to work and be a man. While in this reverie, he unconsciously spoke aloud, "Thank God, I saw the light."

He had obeyed her request and found it good bait, and kept fishing for a better standing before God and man. It proved to be a winner and now he was able to give, too, instead of taking from.

Every one, from tots to grown-ups, that had attended Mincy's backwoods, windowless, dirt-floored, Indian school howled with grief as their little teacher rode out of the village of Oak Center.

The long string of pack horses and cowboys headed for the Bendler stock ranch. They left a visible wake of leaning grass

behind them. This trail in the swales, with snaggy jack oak groves on either side, would guide the way for the men returning with the promised milch cows.

While this trail was being made, Mincy learned that the political, legal estate extractors were trying to become ranch owners by getting the Bendler estate in the courts.

"Can they do it, Ben?" she asked.

"No. We have formed a family partnership and will keep the estate all together as a family concern," said Ben.

"Say, Ben, you have never told me how Waneta and the children were coming on."

"The children are all right," stammered Ben.

Mincy noticed his hesitation. She wondered at it, but rode on in silence.

At length, Ben said, "Waneta went as your mother, Mincy. She died with that dreaded disease, smallpox, soon after you left."

Mincy gazed across the swale, apparently interested in the numerous crows that fluttered and squalled in the branches of the jack oaks beyond.

After a long silence, she asked, "What's become of all the wild pigeons these older people talk about hiding the sun, Ben?"

"I reckon they've gone to the Ozarks, or somewheres. I haven't seen many for some time."

"What makes you ride so fast, and make such long drives, Ben?"

"Something is going to happen on the thirteenth of this month down at the ranch and I want to be there when it does," answered Ben. "And these horses know they are on the home stretch and are as anxious to get in the big pasture as I am to get home and see the children."

"Say, Ben, I've been thinking. Can't I be a mother to those children of yours?"

"You know it!" said Ben. "It's a closed bargain right now, Mincy," and he leaned over and put his arm around the girl, as they rode side by side. "We'll pass the town tomorrow and

I will get the papers; and also see that you get some better clothes."

"I didn't mean it just that way, Ben, but I'm glad. It's leap year, anyway, Ben."

The last camp was made; the home ranch came next. The big canvas was spread on the grass for the last meal on the trip. The cowboys were all sparring and joking each other about what they were going to do when they got home.

"Here," shouted Ben. "Don't you leather pullers have any respect for the future Mrs. Ben Burley?"

The boys doffed their hats and asked to be excused, as they all lined up and shook hands with the smiling girl.

One of Ben's old trusties stared at Ben, and said, "Now you have made us all sore. We've been drawin' straws ever since we left that Jack Oak Center village to see who was to get Mincy. And now you just rounded her up and closed the bargain before any of us had a chance. It's not fair, Ben, but bein' as it's you, we will excuse you this time. But look out when we meet another like her."

"Fold your legs," commanded Ben, "and get outside of them beans, or I'll fire you before we get inside of the big gate; then you will sure starve to death."

The man turned to Mincy: "You must excuse these rough, jesting speeches, Miss Mincy. Us saddle rats like Ben well enough to abuse him a little on such occasions. With us cowboys, hard hits mean real friendship, while with others we may go a little easy to save our mugs."

"Oh, that's all right," said Mincy. "Ben and I were not strangers when we met at the Oak Center village."

"Listen, Ben," said one of the men. "Hear that! It's a sure sign of a dance to hear a whip-poor-will holler before dark."

A start at sun-up the next morning soon revealed more trails, wagon tracks and other signs of life. They soon reached the big gate, which was opened, and then closed behind them. Bunches of horses came galloping up, to visit their returning mates. Another gate was passed and the ranch house was sighted. The shadows of the trees had lengthened. A sharp

turn around an elevated grove and what seemed a real town lay before them.

The only white house for miles around stood on a knoll in the center of a beautiful dale. Apparently there was no one about the house, but buggies, wagons, mules and saddle horses, by the score, were hitched to trees and fences.

"They are all up at the big spring in the woods. I can smell the roasted ox. Yes, yes, I hear them!"

"You're too late, Ben," cried a neighbor. "Caseburg and Mrs. Bendler got married just a few minutes ago."

"Hello, there, Sam! What's the big rush?"

"Nothing, nothing; just looking to see if my horse was all right, that's all. Have good luck, Ben?"

"You bet! We never lost a cow."

"Say, hold on Sam! Is Preacher Jones up there yet?"

"Think so. He was a minute ago. They're all up at the big spring, Ben."

"Say, Sam, won't you run up there while we unpack, whisper to Case and tell him to fetch his wife and my children down to the house. Say that I'm back all O. K. and that I have found Mincy alive and well. Tell Case to keep his mouth shut so close it'll hurt his teeth. Understand?"

Sam shook hands with Mincy, saying, "I reckon I get you all right, Ben."

"Now, Sam, slip this little paper and the yellow cart wheels to Brother Jones; tell him to keep mum until the cookhouse bell rings; then he is to make a little talk to the crowd about surprise parties and such things while we are coming up there. And he is to tie the knot before we dismount. How's that for a change from the new fangled civilization way they talk about? How does that hit you?"

"It'll hit 'em like a mule kick," said Sam, as he rushed away.

"Keep your saddles on, boys. We'll go up on horseback and show 'em how to get married right," said Ben, as he and Mincy headed for the white house on the knoll."

"What's this?" asked Mincy, while they were waiting for Case and the children. "Oh, I see now. It's Case's tobacco



box. It's the skull of some animal, finely mounted. This hinged lid looks like a dog's skull."

"The lid is a coyote's skull," said Ben, as he turned the box upside down. "This bottom skull you see is off of a lower animal."

"I wish it was——" and the girl hesitated and stopped speaking.

Ben pointed to the lettering on the bottom. She read the inscription, N. R. (Beneath the Dog.)

Mincy stared at Ben. "Is it Nat's, Ben?"

He nodded.

"My goodness, Mincy, this is the surprise of my life!" exclaimed Caseburg, as he entered the house. "I was sure you were dead, girl."

After the greeting scene between Case and the girl he had tried so hard to help, and Mincy had hugged and kissed all of Ben's children, Ben drew Mincy up to his side and called his children up in front of them.

"Now," said Ben, "you older ones are old enough to think a little for yourselves. Would you like to have Mincy here for a stepmother?"

"Yes, sir. We always liked Mincy," was the answer.

Mincy hugged them all as Ben started out to ring the bell.

In rushed Sam and breathlessly exclaimed: "You're beaten, Ben! It's all off. Preacher Jones has gone home."

"Horseback or team," asked Ben.

"Drove his black mules," answered Sam.

"Bring all our saddle horses, boys! Be quick!" shouted Ben.

"Come on, Mincy! Them what hesitates lets the cattle get away!" exclaimed Ben, as he hit the saddle.

He shouted, "Take the old creek cut-off trail for the deep ford, Cal. You're on the best horse!"

Cal shot away like an arrow, with Mincy at his heels, followed by Ben and his men.

"Pull a tight rein, Mincy, and look out for trees and the lower limbs."

Hither and thither they rode, dodging the obstructions in their way, until they heard a shout.

"Cal's beat 'im to it! I see the team atop on tother side of the creek," shouted Ben.

Preacher Jones unhitched his mules and came down to the narrow, turbulent stream. Ben tied the little paper and the yellow cart wheels up in his bandana and tossed it across the rushing torrent.

"All right, Brother Burley, come down near the bank."

Ben and Mincy rode up, side by side, near the bank. The men lined up on both sides.

"Going to get married on horseback, Brother Burley?"

"Of course! That's where we live, Brother Jones," answered Ben.

What Cal called the "hobble knot" was witnessed by all of Ben's men. The certificate was handed to Mincy.

"The boys have all kissed the bride for you, Brother Jones. Good-by, Brother Jones."

The roar of hoofs was drowned by the tune of "We won't go home till morning."

This manner of taking squaws by marriage, the conviction and hanging of Tom Horn, the daily production of twenty thousand tons of first class coal in Rock Springs, with a monthly pay roll of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, were suggestive of the passing of outlawry along the line of railroad. The rapid occupation of vast stretches of untamed country by homelike people, the displacing of rendezvousing outlaw camps in Brown's Park by peaceful homes, the recently constructed modern ranch of Charley Sparks, with telephone accommodations one hundred miles from the railway, confirmed the arrival of civilization on the outskirts, closing one of the greatest bookless schools of the inner human ever known to man.

THE END

### WHAT WAS LEFT

About these thieves that I have written,  
Who in their time were justly smitten,  
I'm glad to say there were but few,  
And in my time they met their due.

God bless the rest; they were the best,  
Brave and strong, they cleaned the west;  
And passed it on to civilization  
As a crown for all the nation.

